

**Exploring Myths and Stereotype about Step Mothers: The Effects on Quality of Step
Families Merhabete Woreda, Ethiopia**

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This is to certify that the thesis research prepared by Andinet Geletaw entitled “Exploring Myths, Stereotype Towards Step Mother: The Effects Quality and Stability of Step Families” submitted to School of Social Work for the Partial Fulfillment of Master’s Degree in Social Work.

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Declaration

I, Andinet Geletaw declare that this research entitled “Exploring Myths, Stereotype Towards Step Mother: The Effects on Quality and Stability of Step Families” is my own work and all the source that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of reference and this works has not been submitted before by any others at any institution.

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Signature

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to explore what are myths and stereotype about step mother and how myths and stereotype affects the quality and stability of step families. By applying the qualitative research method 20 respondents are selected, 10 step-mothers and 5 step families, and 5 key informants. Results are reported as step mothers are boorish family members to step children, they are biased and inclined to biological children unable to smooth communication with stepchildren. Step families reported as they are believed dysfunctional, and frequent conflicts are myths given irrespective of the reality of life, also they are assumed as living in frequent conflict.

Key Words - Step mother, Step Family, Stereotype, Myths, Coping Strategy

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background

Step families are one of the diverse types of family arrangements that arise following the death or divorce of the first couple. This sort of family is distinguished from others by the uncertain family boundary among members of step-families, implying a lack of clarity regarding who is in and who is out of the family system (Stewart, 2005). The other common element demonstrated in step families that identifies them from biological families is loss; all step families are the result of the death or divorce of biological families. In such cases, children will have two households: the original one and the one latter that has been created. A typical aspect of step-families is the absence of a biological link between step-parents. The connection between stepchildren and stepparents may sometimes influence the dynamics of the entire family (Combs & Herndon, 1982).

Stepfamilies frequently experience various stresses, such as lower perceptions in stepchildren's minds (Stewart and Shapiro, 2011) and psychological effects such as depression (Stewart and Shapiro, 2011), which affect the quality and stability of the family's relationship along with children's mental health. Common pressure emerges when biological families are changed and a new family is formed. This new structure will be a big point of conflict since it limits the sort of relationship and boundaries by increasing uncertainty that children will have towards their step families (Jensen, et al. 2017).

Step families are a type of structure in which the members of a family are made up of two distinct divorced families with quite diverse lifestyles and experiences. They are a family

arrangement in which two people live and one or both family parents have children, which changes the status of parents into step-parents and/or gives dual status, step-parents and biological parents. Members of step-families are made up of members of previously disintegrated biological families, and they are susceptible to myths and unfavorable views. Myth and stereotype occur as a result of this familial union, as they are considered to be incomplete institution (Cherlin, 1978).

The vulnerability of step families to myth and stereotype is due to their formation in the structure that the stepfamily has organized. Most step families are formed after the divorce of the first marriage. When compared to those formed as a result of the death of one of the couples, the presence of the first biological parents has its own impact on the perception of step families in the community. Both divorced biological families and later step families are subjected to myths and negatively attached characters, though to varying degrees and extents. Societies believed that remarriage in the presence of biological parents was a replacement for the spouse and did not fill the gap of an interrupted family structure (Bashir, 2015).

When parents become stepparents, the mother and father become stepmother and stepfather. Children also become stepchildren at the same time, and this change in status has a direct impact on how they communicate, behave, and interact. Every family member, with the exception of those who are biologically related, encounters a new face, a new experience, and a new behavior that causes marital discord (Mac Donald and Demaris, 1995).

Studies that have looked into related topics have revealed and explored that step families are more vulnerable to negative attachment and description, expressed in negative adjectives, as they are in a constant state of conflict, unstable, and joined for momentary satisfaction and enmity of the previous couple. Instead of considering step families as a diversification of family

structure, they are assumed to be incomplete institutions (Cherlin, 1978), deviant family structures, and deficient (Ganong and Coleman, 1978).

Remarried families (step families), according to Cherlin (1978), are an incomplete institution because their members are more exposed to conflict. As the name suggests, they lack institutional and social rules that would normally serve as guidelines for how to interact and manage within their particular family. Society believed that problems can be solved most of the time forcefully rather than by discussion. Cherlin (1978) deal with such problem as lack of institutional rule and regulation.

Due to the general role division, stepmothers are more prone to myths and stereotype, as well as stigmatized family members from outsiders. There are several stories that depict stepmothers badly, as though they are evil. In almost all stories, they are used as an example of mistreating stepchildren resulting in a lack of interest in the family and overall parenting skills, a difference in parenting stepchildren and biological children, a lack of sense of belonging, less management ability, failure of the step family, and resource sharing from the biological child (Miller, 2005).

The position and status given to stepmother is a key to why she is discriminated against, stigmatized, and exposed to a myths and stereotype, unlike step-father who has the same status for the same family. The given position decides how to act and react, and what to do and not to do are dependent on the given status. For stepmothers, the given status leads to ambiguous role division. Studies show that they are in a high level of stress, tension, and depression than the stepfather and the rest of the step-family members (Hollway, 2017).

Members of step-families have a different understanding of their own and other members' social role which plays a pivotal role in maintaining the quality and stability of step-

families. (Ganong, et al, 1998) understood step families as a multi-person system in which different experienced types of a person from different backgrounds need to exert their own influence experience and impact over the other which may have a positive or negative impact on maintaining quality and stability of step families.

Coleman (2008) also describes stereotype and myths are dependent on the type of stepchildren and stepmothers' residency. The full-time stepchildren and permanently residing stepchildren are not equally connoting negatively stepmother with those of half-time or full-time stepchildren. Access to contact and communication is dependent on the time spent in the stepparents' household.

Merhabete is one of the district located in Amhara Region North Shoa which has homogenous culture and religion. Like any other place there is divorce and remarriage. Almost all people is follower of Orthodox Religion that preach divorce is sin and remarrying the divorced parent is followed by different negative connotations and stereotype. Those divorced community is some have lived with such kind of challenges specially step mothers.

This research has recognized the major challenge step families encounter when compared to biological families in terms of relationships and the factors influencing quality and stability among family members. It looked at the myths and stereotype surrounding step families in Merhabete, North Shoa, Ethiopia. It has also investigated why these stereotypes are more prevalent among stepmothers in the given location. Moreover, how stereotype affect the quality and stability of step families that are connected to stepmothers are also the focus of the research article. Other aspects of the thesis focused on which parts of the communities are more vulnerable to myths and stereotype. Furthermore, this study also discusses the most common

negative attachment or stereotype and why it occurred, the role of other family members in decreasing stereotype and myths, and how such a bad attitude impacts the family as a whole. The influence of myths and stereotype on stepchildren and stepmothers was also part of the examination that has been addressed. Finally, this article studied how stepmothers acquire and live with such attitude and myths to preserve stability.

Having the above points, the quality of a family is determined by the persons who comprise it, the relationship formed between each member, the type of communication used to execute each task, and the amount or degree of communication with each other. The family is the smallest building component of a country, and it is directly related to education, economic growth, and other aspects of the state. The mind setup of biological children and stepchildren differs, which has a substantial influence on their educational backgrounds.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies have been done on myths and stereotype about stepfamilies and stepmothers. Among these, Dantion. M (1993) studied the myth and stereotype of stepfamily in general particularly about stepmothers. He argued that such kinds of families are more vulnerable to conflict and to have divorce again than biological families. He also dealt with the stepmother's identity management case and how they were considered by themselves and others.

Marriage adjustment and satisfaction of stepmother and their role in stepfamilies is also another related issue. As Orleans Palisi and Caddell (1984) discovered through their research, they tried to show how effective and healthy these families should be structured in a way that benefits the whole members.

William and Demaris (2002) studied the relationship between a stepfather and his stepchildren. Their study focused on how stepfathers confront a significant difficulty while raising their stepchildren. It is believed that both parties must be superior to one another to discuss the connection. Furthermore, because biological children and stepchildren have different levels of authority, the fathers require greater respect in whatever type of relationship.

Mac Donald and Demaris (1996) investigated the parenting of biological and stepchildren living in the same household. They deal with one of the major challenges of different parenting and caring for biological and non-biological children at the same time, and reached that more difficulties were seen in the stepmother.

Weaver and Coleman (2005) based their study on a nonresidential stepmother. They researched the impact of an external body on their stepmother and the family. They argued that stepmothers are the backbone of step families and that success and failure are dependent on the stepmother's quality. Stepmothers, on the other hand, are in an ambiguous position in terms of role division either the gendered notion of role division given as a woman or the status given as a stepmother.

White and Booth (1985) have studied the quality and stability of remarriage based on the role and activity of stepchildren, and these children are considered strange for step families.

Miller et al. (2017) conducted a study on perception, experience, myths, and stereotypical attitude about the wicked stepmother and concluded that the stepmother receives the most criticism and stereotype from all types of families.

All the above studies and other literature discuss stepfamily issues, particularly the correlation between stepmothers and stepchildren in a specific culture. Remarriage and the

establishment of stepfamily have different meanings in different cultures and are subject to different myths, misconceptions, and legends. It is important to understand one's community's culture, way of life, attitude toward marriage and divorce, and social norms. As research evolves, I must update and comprehend the current context, because what was true yesterday may have changed or no longer be true today. Situations are changed radically.

The relationship between myths and stereotype about step families and the impact resulting from them was not well covered. The solution that step families and stepmothers use to dispel myths and misconceptions has also received insufficient attention. Other studies that were included in this research did not cover the consequences of myths and misconceptions. Moreover, the quality of life for children in such circumstances is also investigated in the context of Merhabete, Ethiopia. The impact of step families on stepchildren was also understudied in the literature, indicating that more research is needed.

On the other hand, stepmothers are vulnerable to myths and stereotype individually, as stated in different literature. However, the myths and stereotype passed down to stepmothers in Ethiopia's Merhabete woreda have received little attention and require further investigation in their societal context. One of the problems studied was why there are more myths about stepmothers in particular, which require cultural context. Being a stepmother after a divorce or after the death of a husband has different meanings and associated myths and stereotype that vary in extent or degree. This is also part of the research. To cope in such situations, the stepmother must employ adaptation mechanisms. What mechanism is implemented by Merhabete Stepmothers to maintain the livelihoods of families? What aspects of the stepchild force the stepmother to exhibit emotional behavior that exposes them to myths and stereotype?

Concerning the study area and covered issues, the study that I came across is not done in

the Ethiopian societal context, which may provide a different story because different societies have their own culture, way of life, standards, ethics, and so on, all of which are assumed to have an indispensable impact on and contribution to the subject matter under discussion.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Taking into account marriage and remarriage as a lifelong aspect of the community, being stepparents is a related issue coming with remarriage. People have negative attitudes toward stepparents despite the lack of evidence. Some people decide to remarry without knowing what challenges they will face after they marry, and simply conflict arise because both ways of life have misconceptions such as being problematic, dysfunctional, and incomplete institutions. On the other hand, myths and stereotype about stepmothers become far more prevalent than those about stepfathers. These paper provided some realities about the stepparent's life, enabling the change of negative attitudes about those step families at the individual, community, and social institution level. The type of family also influences children's educational success; biological and stepchildren cannot live together, which affects results. The research provides some insight into how to deliver a special psychological treatment that builds stepchildren's mentalities for such family-related issues.

1.4 General Objective of Study

The general objective of research is understanding step families stereotype and myths and towards step mother. Also the impact stereotype and myths on the life of step families.

1.5 Specific Objectives

1. To explore the myths and stereotype, towards step families and step mothers in Merhabete Woreda, North Shoa Zone, Ethiopia.

2. To identify the reasons why there are myths and stereotype toward step mothers and step families in Merhabete, North Shoa Zone, Ethiopia.
3. To find out how stereotype affects the quality and stability of step families in Merhabete, North Shoa Zone, Ethiopia.
4. To find out the adapting strategies that are implemented to survive myths and misconceptions

1. Research Questions

1. What are myths & stereotypes forwarded to step mothers and step families?
2. Why myths and stereotype are towards step mothers and step families?
3. How myths and stereotype affect quality and stability of step families?
4. What are the adapting strategy of step mothers to survive myths and stereotype towards them?

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to the analysis of thematic issues related to those families who have been living in a form of step family. In addition, the geographical area to be considered by the study is limited to Merhabete Woreda, Ethiopia.

1.7 Organization of Study

These research is organized in six chapters. The first chapter consists of introductory part of the study which entails background of the study, statement of the problem, study questions,

main and specific objectives, scope and limitations, significance of the study, and organization of the study.

On the second chapter of these research is review of related literature that is concerned about and give detailed information. In literature review experience of other researcher, finding of their research, their conclusion and recommendations are included in literature review part.

On the third chapter of these study research methodology is explained in detail, how to collect all necessary data and employed method express the validity of research. How to analyze collected data, ethical consideration to be followed and quality assurance are described in third chapter. The fourth chapter is devoted to data analysis, presentation and chapter five is about discussion. Finally, the last chapter is about conclusion implication for social work and general and followed by recommendation.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

Family is made of interconnected and interdependent for the wellbeing of that institution. System theory recognized that world view at large and family as a system in minimum level. Accordingly, family as system each member are interconnected and sustainability and maintaining the quality and stability are dependent on the hand of each single part that constitute whole. Family system theory relies on the complexity, interdependence and wholeness of family affect sustainability of specific family system (Schrodt, et al, 2007)

Spouses might get divorced and entered in to next remarriage due to different factors that affect their first household. Social Exchange theory (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008) gives some insight why people decide to have divorce. According to exchange theory couples decide mainly in three major reasons. The first one is benefit related to current marriage. Human being looks toward material. benefit obtained by any means. The other pushing factor that served as fermentation for divorce is looking alternative to other marriage that may more benefit to both parties in terms of all their interest imaged in to their mentality (South & Spitze, 1986).

Grounded research method investigate that about the role and mother and step mother in step families. Mother have a lot of role and served as back bone of family. The first functioning aspect is displayed in serving bridge between and within all members of families particularly between father, stepfather and children/stepchildren in a form of mediator when conflict arose. She may also defend her child during debating and give coverage when fight is between

stepfather and children, transfer information across family member, interpret complex words and message are also the other key functioning place of mother (Weaver & Coleman, 2010).

On the other hand, grounded theory based research argued that stepmother have undefined role but can be considered as key position of mothering assumption. Mothering but not mother role, other focused role and outsider role. All step mother and their role attached to them is highly influenced by biological mother, step children, biological children, their spouse, society and other extended kin relation. Positive role enactment and success are attached and credited to step children and failure are given to those step mothers (Weaver & Coleman, 2010).

These theories state that step families are result of divorce which is directly related to social exchange theory which argues peoples look always alternative that maximize their benefit. These points are fully related with the study undergone. On one hand, grounded theory views step mothers are in maid are sandwiched in both dimensions. Acting as real mother is taken as replacing biological mother and acting as step mother is considered as due to absents of blood relation. Also step mothers are in confusion of role division which is stated in feminist theory, view of gender notion of role division. She is caring two types of children who have blood relation and non-biologically related children The research investigated how why step mothers are exposed to myths and misconception and quality and stability of step families.

2.1.1. Family system Theory

Family system theory of (Kerr & Bowen, 1988) regulated the notion all family member is interconnected and functioning of each member with in the family and in the system that family is embedded. The wellbeing of one's family member has direct influence on the other member and the same is true in the system context. This theory views family as complex social system in

which members intact and interact to influence one over the other. This influence implemented over all family aspect positively or negatively. Negative notion over once family member affect thy system of that given specific family.

2.1.1 Feminist Perspective

According to the feminist perspective role construction process is greatly influenced by gender context. In most of the society role division is affected by gender. In any family what to do what not to do is decided by gender and cultural expectation of the community. But we can say that step parents give more activities and tasks for mother or step mother and it becomes more difficult for woman than man. In step parents, step mothers were not expected to act as step mother rather as a woman, what gender construction of role division gave them even the child are not biologically belonging to them. Step mothers take care of step children house hold task and most of them other aspects of family life because that expected from them as a woman (Weaver & Coeman, 2005).

On the other hand, step mothers can be categorized as residential and non-residential. In addition to categories of mother, step mother and nonresidential step mother, children also may be different in terms of their belongingness which makes child caring more difficult for step mother that affect quality and stability of step parents and expose step mothers for extra myths and misconceptions. Those children are biological children, step children and adoptive children.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

2.2.1 Step Families

Step families are one of the diverse form of families' structure in which they come after the loss of first married couple through death or divorce. Step families differ from the other

forms of families in many characteristics like that of ambiguous family boundary between and with and members of step families meaning lack of clarity who is in and who is out of family system (Stewart, 2005) the other common features displayed in step families that makes unique from biological family is loss, all step families are resulted from loss of biological families either in death or divorce. Children have two houses. Step children have two house that is biological mother form and biological father formed. Absent of legal relationship between step parents is also described as common features of step families. Sometimes step children and step parent relation determine the whole family's system, dependent on child and step parent relation (Combs & Herndon, 1982).

Step families are commonly having different stressor that affect the quality and stability of family's membership as well exert psychological impact on step child. From those common stressor features are the relationship experienced before formation of step families or in biological families is shifted, some of new structure will be cause of conflict, limited type of relation or having boundary and uncertainty among child are some of the features in step families (Jensen, et al. 2017)

2.2.2 Divorce

As basic institution marriage is not expected to divorce due to single reason. The failure of first marriage because of lots of reason leads to establishments of step families (reconstituted families). For one marriages collapse one or more interrelated reason can be mentioned. The common domain for all divorce is, it happens irrespective of religion, culture, language political attitude and education. Drug abuse, unlimited parental involvement, early marriage, extra marital status, sexual dissatisfaction and related like reasons can be mentioned for divorce (Lowenstein, 2005)

On the other hand, remarriage also have different meaning on the bases of formation of remarriage, remarriage due to death and remarriage due to divorce have their own meaning on the locality. Both of them are the way of creating step families. Remarriage after death is called Supplant, way of finding supportive wife. Remarriage after divorce is known as Augment, replacement of previous wife. Both type of remarriage has significance effect on misconceptions and negative attitude created on mentality of society. Accordingly, more myths are forwarded to wards step families which is created through divorce, augment (Spainer & Furstenberg, 1987)

In the last five decades, in modern world divorce and remarriage become common features of our planet and the most common event happened and continued up to now. There are lots of question to be answered through research when we think about family. As the rates of divorce are increasing, rate of remarriage is also increasing. These implies people are not rejecting the idea of being married, rather they reject first marriage due to many reason. They are interested to stay on marriage but pushing factors become power full to form divorce. A person who involved in remarriage assumes and thinks he/she may fill her interest through remarriage. In addition, one of the couple need to have a child but the other couple may not have similar feeling which force to form divorce (Cherlin & Frank, 1994).

Women who marry in their teenage years or early twenties are more likely to remarry than women who are married later, meaning women who married young may have less experience in and less preference in living independently. Among women who need to engage in remarriage some of them face or challenge in finding suitable spouses than other. They are trying second of their chance, but people seek first and give priority for first couple. Related to these women who have a child, she faces an extra challenge if she needs to have remarriage. Even if

she gets partner who share responsibilities may be have greater chance for conflict than others (Cherlin & Frank, 1994).

Remarriage can be understood in to two ways, first when one spouse has been married before and divorced without children and second ways to view remarriage is both spouse may involve in remarriage and may/not have children from previous marriage. This could be due to absence defined rule and regulation about the relationship between and within members of step families, role division of members, defined expected behavior and role ambiguity remarriage is considered as incomplete institution (Cherlin, 1978) when it is compared with biological family. Uncertainty about scope of one's responsibility, uncertainty about particular behavior, uncertainty role behavior and role division and effect of one's action and activity over the other are some of the features that leads to argue remarriage is incomplete institution (Dantion, 1993).

Now days in the world step families are one of the common type of family, that they make different from other types of family is members are coming from different types of family that are dissolved through divorce. From all types of family negative myths and stereotype, more propagated towards step families in general and step mother in particular. Stepmothers face challenges in terms of identity management. Step mothers judged by gender women that the community accept as norm, they judge themselves in with lens of women, mother and step mother, they are also evaluated step children, step children mother and by social institution. While step family is common form family in the contemporary time they are not free from stigmatization. They are assumed to be as they are less functional; less healthy, exposed to conflict in every day patterns of life, they are less communicable. These all features are attached to step families just as they are stepfamily only (Miller, et al, 2017).

Instead of recognizing diverse type of family membership step families are vulnerable to myths and stereotype irrespective of family members consisted in step families' peoples are going to make comparison between biological family and step family in which they are different totally in terms of way of life and members consisted in the family. Biological family have biological relation and live in clear set of role division whether in agreement before marriage or gender notion of role division, whereas step family do not have clear set role division. What is expected from members of step family is in confusion. They have limited power one over the other unlike that of biological family (Jones, 2013).

2.2.3 Quality and Stability of Step Families

Sustainability of step families are dependent on quality of families live which is greatly affected by the economic parents – child relationship and step parents' relation with step children. Stress which is not reflected in biological families are mostly displayed in step families due to both parties need their own interests until they confirm each other specially for the wellbeing of respective children. Economic dependency also has great role in life of quality and stability of step families. In step family context children who maintain strong relation with step parents are less exposed to instability as whole of step family and the reverse is true (Cumming, et al., 2006).

Lower expectations of step mother from step children and from some step parents is the factors that affect quality and stability of step families. Surprisingly High expectation also has impact of its own, some step child expects immediately step mothers as biological mother but if they did not get with their expectation the profit will be less quality and instability of step

families. Quality and stability of step families highly related with child self-adjustment and maladjustment (Fosco, et al. 2014).

Quality and stabilities of step families are highly affected by the presence of step children, due to myths and stereotype, experience high divorce rate. Step children have less positive attitude and interaction towards step parent and those parents who lives with step children argued to their biological children as the families are not stable to and difficulties to live together in the same household. On the other hand, step children are affected in step families as the step parents decide to live excluding step child (White and Booth, 1985). Also the quality and stability of step parents in relation to step children depends on the duration of re marriage and age of step child. In the first years they have good relationship but gradually shift from good and smooth relation to in stable and less qualified step parents (Ambert, 1986). Less involvements of one of the parents is also affect the quality and stability of step parents which is not reflected in biological family.

2.2.4 Myth and Stereotype

Stereotype is defined as association and belief about characteristics and attributes of group and its member that shape how people think about and respond to the group. Stereotypes are usually over generalized, simplified, exaggerated and negative. Members of family, whole community, social institution, have negative attitude toward step family generally and in particular towards step mother. There is also evidence that stereotyped group can internalize negative characterization attributed to them resulting form of negative stereotyping (Miller, et al, 2017).

Level of myth and stereotype all are related with the type of family organization. This is to mean that type of family formation has direct influence on the extent of myths and stereotype. Biological related family did not equally expose to myth and negative attitude with step family orientation and single parent's family. Even all step families are not equal exposure for myths and negative attitude which is stereotype. There are step families who are categorized under Mother- Step Father and Father -Step Mother. Such kind of attitude and myths may be related with level of socialization between and within family members, stress in step child and step parents, instability and clotting life in that family, quality of parenting particularly related with step child life, level of communication is some of features which myths and stereotypes are expressed.

As Sweeney (2007) Step Father- Mother oriented families characterized as less child well-being than those of single parent's type of families. Also suicide is high in Step Father type of family when it is compared with other family orientation. Even the child parenting system and quality of parenting is relatively less than other family. Economically as the researcher informed as Step Father-Mother oriented family have greater advantage than mentioned family system.

Myth on the other hand popularly conceived to be analogous to falsehood and contain false and/or negative information. Myths represent a way of viewing the world that embodies a cultural belief, regardless of whether these beliefs are accurate. According to Burner (1960), myth can be characterized by two components. The first one is externalization, described corpus image of identity", provides a cultural explanation of the way world works. Second component is internalization. Myth can only exist to the extent that cultural member internalized corpus of ideas propagated by myth (Daniton, 1993).

Regarding to step mother hood there are two generic myths that are simultaneous, cross cultural and trans-historical. First one is “evil step” mother and second is “instant love”, when step mother is expected to love and assimilate immediately in to family and love children as her own child (Daniton, 1993).

Fine, (1986) Explored that step mothers have less perception from step children than step fathers. The perception and attitude depends on family type based, single parents, step families like step mother father, step father mother and complex remarriage meaning both parents having child from previous marriage. Family orientation has its own role on perception of step child by community and step child by their friends. Children from stepfather and from step mother are equally vulnerable to myths and stereotype in similar stage. Less myth and stereotype is forwarded towards step father child than step mother child. Also step mothers were having more exposure to negative attitude than step father, not only themselves but also their families have similar status of negative attitude and stereotype.

2.2.5 Step Mothers Role

There is no role model or standard about how to act and react for step mothers and also are in conflict between unrealistic expectation of role from step family member and the role they are performing (Ganong, et al, 1990). Step mothers are in mine field and sandwiched in gender notion of role division and the reality the face in step families in which they encounter undefined and ambiguous role division. Due to the absence of social script or standard about step mother exposure to confusion, myths and stereotype is high (Gosseline & Rousseau, 2012).

They are caring two type of children who have difference in attitude, perception, reaction and evaluation to the same person. She is engaged with caring child who have warm reaction and

regard, at the same time expected to care who do not have any affection, negative attitude and perceive negatively which leads step mother to stress and which is source of myths and misconceptions Miller (2005) and Gosseline & Rousseau (2012)

2.2.6 Myths and Stereotype Toward Step Families

Instant love is expected. Behind the reality, new couple need few time to have understand and love each other society and family member perceived that immediate love will be there. The other myths are self-adjustment will take only few months, but the research shows that years are needed to adjust self and family as whole. To build strong relationship between step families member every one need to forget the past experience and should agree on common vision (Daniton, 1993).

Others assume make new relationship and forgot the child. Research indicated that biological children are taken as key for establishing step families. In discussion of forming step parents, they put child under central criteria. Children of divorce damaged forever is also mentioned as myth about step families, studies shown after year or 2 years divorced children, step children maintain their equilibrium (Baker, 2013)

2.2.7 Myths and Stereotype Toward Step Mother

Step families particularly step mother from all family member are supposed to engage in house hold work activity which the main factors that lead to negative attitude from step children and step children biological mother. Step mother role typically is difficult than stepfather and biological mother. This is due to contradiction in expectation of step mother hood role. Step mother are expected to engage in dilemmatic homework activity, caring step children at the same

time to distant from step child. Close and distant simultaneously is difficult. Myths make step mothers new families and her role difficult

2.2.7.1 Evil step mother

Step families are subjected to myths and stereotype, from all step mother are one of most who are negatively evaluated, children always have resent towards step mother because they assume them (step mother) are someone who are coming replacing their mother and jealous who are sharing father time. Failure of that specific step families like disciplining children are always given to step mothers (Dainton, 1993).

2.2.7.2 Instant love

Step mother after joining new families are expected to have immediate love without step child reaction. Segment of societies including step children forgot that mothering is natural process and comes from biological ties between family member. From this point not good relation but simple relation did not come overnight. Step mother's positive attitude also may not be perceived and supported in step children lens (Dainton, 1993).

2.2.7.3 Clueless step mom

The meaning of fault between step mother and biological mother totally have different intention. Step mother makes series mistake that leads to conflict with stepchildren and step children biological mom. This mistake used as fuel for other conflict. Simple mistake done by biological mother is huge mistake for step mother. Also they assume step mother do mistake deliberately

2.3 Mechanism applied by Step Mothers to Adapt Stereotype and Myths

Step mothers have different mechanism to adopt and cope up myths and stereotype towards them; from those mechanisms first one is searching help from the professional, self-help, their parenting book and taking to their friend and other family member. Second adopting mechanism applied or implemented is to adopt an attitude towards them, including tolerate, ignorance and accepting any negative attitude and stereotype about step mother. The other way is by becoming good step mother unlike to how the community understand step mother (Miller, et al, 2017).

Step mother particularly and step families in general apply different mechanism to how cope up and survive with myths and stereotype for the sec of maintaining stability of families. Since such kind of attitude or stereotype emanate from different external bodies they implement different strategies with respective of source. Stereotypical attitude and myths may arise from step children, stepchildren biological mother, step couple parents and some other segments of community are some source who have stereotype and myths towards step mothers and step families.

2.3.1 Seeking Help

Step mothers are in need of and are interested in finding of help when they are in state of feeling negatively judged who can help to adopt and survive these myths and stereotype that will disrupt remarriage or step families' member again. They need and fined help from her parents, her biological child, from the person who have an experience of such kind of situation, from professionals for counseling. Asking person who have such kind of life experience is one of the best way to maintain mental equilibrium as taking and sharing best ways how previously cope (Miller, et.al, 2017).

2.3.2 Adopting Myths and Stereotype

Some step mothers adopt myths and stereotype as normal status when being step mother. Such kind of step mothers without seeking any help from external just simply adopt, ignore, tolerate and accept are best ways for adopting myths and stereotype forwarded towards them. Also they engaged in trying to change such kind of attitude are implemented in pair with above mentioned systems. Step mothers here focus only on their activity whether it is correct or not through the lens of externals (Miller, et.al, 2017).

2.3.3 Taking it as Joke

Step mother also use and believe for themselves as myths and stereotype may be day to day part of life. But once they take and consider it as joke not rather than truth about them. Sometimes they understand negative judgements and stereotype as normal issue raised in house hold for amusement and chatting family members (Miller, 2017)

2.3.4 Believe as I am not Brutal (wicked) Step Mother

Step mother in these category try to show all positive aspect towards step child, the main cause for stereotype. They try to be good mother for step children. When they engaged in to such kind of families they have plan not to be evaluated in a negative lens through all best alternatives. The work hard and moderate family interaction (Miller, et.al, 2017).

2.3.5 Hide step motherhood

Step mothers also apply other method not to be exposed and judged negatively before the negative attitude happened. They try to hide status of step mother for step child. As much as possible I did all the best to be considered as good mother (Miller, et.al, 2017).

2.4 Impact of Myths and Stereotype

Myths, and Stereotypical representation towards step families create and perpetuate disadvantages for step families structure and included member. this type of thinking gradually become fixed in the mentality of step children and other members of societies where step families located. Affecting peoples cognitive process and create predetermined and pre imagination and to give a chance to understand through questioning the reality. Also myths and negative evaluations push biological parents limit on their family member relation and contact with and towards step families. For example, biological mother who have stereotype attitude toward step family and step children will have limit and prohibit any contact of her child with step child by assuming step children behavior will have transferred to my child. Also loss of confidence in recognized member and loss also in sense of belongingness are impacts of myths and stereotype (Ganong, et al, 2017).

2.5 Conflict Between Step Child and Step Mother

Many step children hate step mother without any knowledge about step mother's behavior due to predetermined attached feature and character given to the step mother. Some step child hate step mother due to that they believe that liking step mother considered as treachery or betrayal of biological mother (Martin, 2009). Jealous relation from both step child step mother towards biological father also one of the key reason why step mom and step child engaged to conflict. They try to attract father one over the other. Power over step child from step mother also lead to conflict. If step child did not accept her power conflict can be happening. Children also believed that step mother are obstacles for intimacy between child biological father and biological mother. Some step child takes biological mothers view towards step mother and

apply her ideas on step families to detach step mother and biological father by assuming biological parents will merge together again (Martin, 2009).

2.6 Step Children in Step Family

On average most of the step children who are living in step family oriented type of family are faced problem of self-adjustment (Dunn, 20020. Family conflict leads to lose healthier family connection, social and economic interruption depression are common problem that step children encounter when they are members of step families. Step children are directly impacted when there is shift from biological family to step family. They are expected to live with new sibling, new step parent, new environment, also new village new friend, which have direct and significant impact on the step children (Dunn, 1993). Most of the time step children leave their home early with less treatment and stay away outside unlike that of biological children.

2.7 Cause of Conflict Among Step Children and Step Parents

(Dan, 2018) investigated that step parents and step children as well as all step families' member may be in frequent conflict in numbers of reasons. Underestimating biological parents of step children, talking negative ideas about biological parents of step children, over control or less control on step children, the less involvements of either part on child caring can be mentioned as key for the conflict arise on step families. Also unrealistic expectation among each family member towards each other is taken as fuel which burn conflict. Feeling of less treatments from one body of step family member, it could be step children of step children biological parent.

2.8 Topics with in Step Family

Step families also have concerned about what to talk with who is big issue, important point which their closeness is reflected that have great role on exposure to myth and stereotype. They are assumed to be less treatment and not interested to talk more with step child un like that of biologically related family member (Bashir, 2015)

All family to maintain their stability, they have to discuss each issue in order to have long marital life. But type of family, affect the way how to discuss, what agenda should be raised, with whom to discuss are depends on the members of family. When we compare biological family and step family it is possible to discuss any issue in biological definition. On the other hand, what is correct in previous marriage now it may be wrong when they become step parents. Culture, age, time dimension affects what is right and what is wrong (Bashir, 2015).

Step children cannot freely talk as they are talk in their biological family. Step parents cannot equally discuss with their biological and step children. (Weaver. & Coleman, 2005). The extent to which step children feeling and belonging the step parents and biological parents and claiming of step children step parents as kin or biological related parents is one of the significant aspect to have good communication. For step parents, a child who think the step parents as strange and/or close relation have great influence on the parent's relation (Ganong. et al, 2017).

2.9 Status Identity Management

Identity can be defined as an individual's self-concept. Thus an individual's identity involves belief about who he or she is and how she should be perceived and treated in social life. Although our identities are frequently manifested in the roles we enact notion of identity is broader than role. Roles are expectation held about the occupation of social status or position in

social system. Accordingly, identity conflict is displayed in step families than biological family, and step mother than stepfather. Step mother are in confusion due to the fact that the way they act or behavior they displayed may be acceptable to partial member of step family and may not be some others. They are not only members of step family, but also other social system who judge, evaluate step mothers and give their own identity (Danitton, 1993).

2.10 Role Division

Marriage is seen as an institute which family members are organized according to sex, age, hierarchy, gender notion of specific community. Role divisions in all family are structured according to the gender notion of all culture in a particular society. What women are expected to perform and what mans are going to do and not to do in order to maintain their marriage to have life long duration, settled through gender notion of culture. While gender notion gives role division for all members of family especially mother and father and/or step mother and step father, more tasks are given to mother or step mother, which in turn leads to be judged negatively. Step mothers face conflict between the expectation of womanly role that is nurturing and step parents that is more distant (Miller, et al, 2017).

Step mothers have a lots of role based on the society they function inside. Mothering but not a mother role, other focused role and outside role are major categories of the function of mother and step mother. Step mothers do not act based on their interest as they are biological mother. Rather they are participating an all activity of family level or community based on perception of community (Weaver & Coleman, 2005).

Step family lacks the clear role division. What step mother should perfume, what step children and other family member must do and not to do is not clearly described and sometime

act based on their previous experience. Such kinds of activities expose them to stereotype and myths. In such kinds of situations step mother face more myths and stereotype and encounter harder life than other member of families (Draughon, 1975).

One of the greatest fields of role division is child caring area, in which step mothers were more stigmatized. One of the biggest challenges of step family is caring and raising children and creating fertile ground for relationship between step parents, step children and biological children. The base for the success and failure depends up on relationship exist between each member especially all member with mother and step mother. From child caring point of view step mothers are more loaded than stepfather. The father is whether step or biological father it is possible to have immediate and good communication when it is compared to mother. Creating good relationship also affected by coming of new biological child for step mother of previous child. Related to these issue the other thing to be considered is, if step mother born her first biological child, she has unique and special meaning and take the step children as invader and strange that revive her biological children. This leads mother to decide mother of biological children shift the role division which may cause intense conflict between members of step parents (Mac Donald & Demaris, 1996).

2.11 Family Belongingness

Other critical issue that expose step mother to myth and stereotype is the way how she treats step children to have feeling of belongingness to that family. Step mother believe that step children have their biological mother and related kin family, which makes them sense less for their current life that push them to feel less belonged to step family. "Family belongingness refers to sense and level of membership in family. Belongingness has more in common

conceptually with cohesion and closeness than claiming. Family belonging associated with having positive and closer ties with the group. In step families, step relationship; biological parents, sibling and extended kin may also contribute to a step child feeling of family belonging” (Ganong, et al, 2017).

Even though all members have their own role in family closeness the role of mother cannot be compared with other family member specially to build step mother-stepchild relationship. Even other member follow what mother have an attitude towards step children can shape and exert its own influence towards step child status and membership to family (Ganong, et al, 2017).

2.12 Role of Children in Step Family

White & Booth (1985) studies about the position and effect of step children on step families. “Step children are considered as negative force not to have good marital stability. Research on natural families’ consistency shows that step children have negative effect on marital stability and satisfaction. Step children reduce marital interaction, results more conflict and increase stereotype and myths towards step mother. Cherlin (1978). Hypothesis explicitly identifies step children as a chief destabilizing element in remarriage and Becker has suggested that step children were negative capital for remarriage. This kind of issue becomes high when step children is from father side and become in state of equilibrium when both parents have biological children for themselves and step children for other parents. On the other hand, for step mother if there is new coming biological child the existing step child is considered as strange for that household (MacDonald, & Demaris, 1996)

2.13 Power over Step Children

Step mother faces challenges during nurturing children especially step children. Step children also tends to rebel against step mother over all activity and adopting parenting role. During parenting there is power action reaction between parents and who is going to be parented. In all aspects of life of step family relative to biological family, they have more exposure and are more vulnerable to conflict. One main issue is who can control step children? Does the step child really accept and behave the ideas of over control and being supervised by step parents especially by step mother, what biological mother and/or father advice about step parent's power over their child? On the other hand, does step parents have equally parents step children and biological children, does child get equal parental monitoring are questions need answer. Depending on age, sex of either biological or step children parental monitoring vary across different types of family, but biological parents more biological monitoring than step parents. Also it is totally different that parental monitoring between step mother and step father is not the same (Level, et al, 2003).

Stepmothers do not act as a stepmother. They rather they are expected as mother in all dimension of household. There is no norm, model and standard for how stepmother in stepfamily involve. Unlikely to stepfathers, stepmothers always find themselves in mothering role and adopt lots of household task in stepfamily. But they cannot punish, take over the control over child, children also did not recognize stepmothers power control (Miller, et al, 2017).

2.14 Step Father - Step Children Power Relation

One of the major problems from variety of challenges is step father relationship with their step children. They face challenges during cultivating their biological and step children. The

revival tension of power increase when there are more than two types of children. Both part need to be winner over the interests of other. Step fathers need to be respected through step children conformation of rule and regulation, what they order to do and not to do.

Based on sex relation, step father over control and supervise step son and biological son, step mother may control and associate step daughter and they believe that such kind of relation produce less conflict.

Normative theory, similar with theory of social capital argued that, adolescents who spent more time with the biological father may be less likely to accept authority and control of step parents than those who spent less time with or never see their biological parents. More interaction with biological parents increase the chance to neglect step parent control of over step child and increase the chance to eliminate step families' norms and rule (Mac Donald & Demaris, 2002).

2.15 Risk Management in Step families

As compared with biological families, the risk for dissolution in step families is more displayed in step families than firs married couple. Dynamics of step families is different from other type of family orientation. Child bearing is key to such kind of difference between family orientation. In first married couple this issue is not taken as risk where as in step families child caring is one of great deal that need decision between step parents. Step families mostly starts their livelihood with more than two family member. Similarly, Cherlin (1978) analysis of incomplete institution of step families argued that lacks norm especially concerning financial management and child bearing issues which makes them to be considered as incomplete institution.

What makes happy between step family and first married couple also slightly unique. In biologically related (first couple) family “satisfying marital relationship is corner stone for being happy family that makes good relationship between child and parents and have role in risk management, where as in step families establishing workable environment may be key part and more than enough to have happy family” (Adler, 2004).

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Philosophical Stance

Despite the fact that philosophical stance is hidden in most research (Slife and William, 1995), it has a greater influence in each research activity. The philosophical ideas of the research have a powerful influence and help the researcher explain why he/she/they are using the applied method and enable them to choose whether a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method is preferable. In addition to the researcher's previous experience and world view, the adviser's experience, world view, and type of subject all play a role in determining which method should be used for success.

Social constructivists hold the assumption that understanding is based on the reality in which they live and work. Meaning is subjective and based on the experience and way of life of the target group. There is no single meaning or reality across different cultures, communities, and situations. The research is guided by a social constructivist theory perspective, which holds that there is no single reality but rather a subjective expression of an idea (Creswell, 1995). The researcher guided through these view in away from community to community from family to family and from individual to individual myths and stereotype and extent of stereotype is different and the way they view such kind of attitude is dependent in each target group.

3.2 Research Method/Design

Based on the subject matter to be studied, the qualitative research method is preferable and should be applied for the success of the research. Qualitative research allows the researcher to have in-depth and detailed data about the subject to be covered (Creswell, 2014). This paper's

topic requires more detail and in-depth understanding, and it contributes to the development of new and unique ideas. Respondents are also able to disclose their experiences, thoughts, and feelings without constraints. Qualitative research is a method of investigating and gathering data using open-ended questions about the meaning and interpretation of a group or individual, as well as a human problem. Target groups' points of view are highly reflected in data collection. The way of collecting data is mostly from particular to general, which is one of the features of the qualitative research method (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research design is employed because it helps the researcher to have broad, holistic, and inclusive information (Sofaer, 1999). From those strategies of qualitative research method, phenomenological research is preferred and applied for these subject matter.

"Phenomenological research assists in the collection and in-depth exploration of events, phenomena, processes, and activities concerning one or more individuals." Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using various data collection methods over a limited period of time (Creswell, 2009). The researcher can set aside his or her own experience in order to understand those of participants in the study (Nieswiadomy, 1993).

3.3 Sampling Technique

The researcher's objective and target group determined the sampling technique to be applied. The study deals with the type of family that is a stepfamily in this context. The target group of this study is limited to stepparents and step families. The quality of the data collected is determined by the type of participants and how it was collected in relation to the subject matter under investigation.

Based on this, in this study, I used the availability or convenience sampling technique. The reason I used this sampling technique is that it was extremely difficult to find a stepfamily, and I was supposed to collect data from every available place.

3.4 Target Population and Sampling

3.4.1 Target and Source Population

Population can be defined as all people or items (unit of analysis) with the characteristics that one wishes to study (Gupta, 2012). The target population of this study will be those families in Merhabete Woreda that have formed step family and their total number is found to be approximately 200.

3.5 Sample Size

The point where no new data is gathered will determine the size of the sample. The researcher stops adding another informant when the data collected before is similar or if the collected data is homogeneous (Mack, 2005). There is no common guideline that determines the number of informants included when using volunteer sampling. According to Creswell (2009), reliability is how consistent the data is across step families, and competency is how well the informant is capable of conveying adequate information (Tongco, 2007). The researcher decided on the size based on the consistency and similarity of data collected from previous informants based on the notion above stated, if data is homogeneous from the respondent, by considering the absence of heterogeneous data, the researcher can saturate the sample by adding new respondents. About 20 respondents were selected based on the availability of step families to participate in the study. Of those participants, 10 are stepmothers, 5 are step families, and 5 are key informants.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

The above mentioned research design and sampling technique is effective when the researcher use wide source of data rather than relying on single source of data. The mechanism used to collect all of the important ingredients that make research complete determines success. Real understanding relays on an in-depth interviews and key informant interview that are proposed by researcher's availability of samples.

3.6.1 In- depth Interview

"An in-depth interview is a sort of qualitative research in which intense individual interviews are conducted with a limited group of respondents to investigate their perspectives on

a certain issue." When the researcher seeks extensive information on personal, family, or community life that provides a more contextual figure and full picture of the subject matter to be investigated, an in-depth interview is more beneficial. In-depth interview questions should be open-ended, allowing participants to express their entire thoughts on the suggested issue, and should be presented in a factual form rather than an opinion or a closed form (Boyce & Neal, 2006).

An in-depth interview is most appropriate for situations where the researcher wants to ask an open-ended question of relatively few people as opposed to surveys that use a large number of samples. These questions are prepared as open-ended, unanswered yes-or-no questions in a semi-structured format that is better suited to conversational use, and the flow of the questions is interrelated with the previous questions and is used and applied in this research (Guion et al., 2006).

3.6.2 Key Informant Interview

Key informants interview is appropriate when generating extra information to have completed information in order to make the research full. Even if key informants important, it has own advantage and limitation. One of the advantage of key informants is providing data and insight that cannot be obtained in other method. Also key informant's interviewee can be accessed easily with possibility of getting peoples with full of information. Also it helps to collect data which is not obtained from the in depth interview (Kumar, 1989). From the total numbers of respondents 5 of them are key informants' interviewee.

Questions are developed with language professionals in line with local culture and translated into the Amharic language, which is similar to the local language, without bringing

about a change in meaning for both the researcher and respondent. Respondents' responses were also translated into the English language by asking respondents to rephrase their sentences. When a researcher faces some local words, they find other words with Amharic language teachers.

Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with those who were available. The interview is less structured and more informal. Unstandardized interviewing (Creswell, 2005) is the opposite extreme of standardized questions in terms of the rigidity of the question. In a standardized question, participants are expected to directly answer the question; no further information can be extracted. In addition to these required documentation steps, participant confirmation will include video and voice recordings.

The interview questions are developed differently. Respondents are involved with different questions. The question was developed based on the references that the researcher used for citations. The first teams to be asked were those community members who live as stepparents and step families. They are questioned about their experiences with marriage and remarriage, how their stepfamily formed them, how they form stepfamily if a precondition from stepfamily exists, the most common misconceptions and myths, and how they adapt and survive with misconceptions.

However, because the myth, misconceptions, and negative attitudes are shared by other members of the community, they are included in the interview, as are questions about the reactions to step families and how they heard about them.

I have interviewed 20 participants, from the total numbers 10 of them are step mothers who have their own children but not living with them and on the other side children who are

living with their mother. In terms of education three of them are diploma and degree graduate. Five of them are educated up to grade 12 and the remaining participants did not attend any education. Seven of the step mothers from the total number has 2-3 biological children and 1-2 step children with remarried two times. The remaining step mother live with only one biological children. The age of respondents was ranges from twenty-two up to thirty-eight. Step families who participated under the research has lived together minimum of five years and at least one step children with two biological children. Those key informants are included from local elders and religious fathers. For the sec of confidentiality, I used my own coding and names for all respondents except key informants who gave me full of interest to use the right name directly.

The interview was administered for step families including step children, step mother and key informant who gave the researcher all necessary information about step families about the subject area of research. Those selected key informants were elders, religious fathers, some segments of the community particularly neighbors for the target step families and some of step child school friends. The number of elders and religious fathers were five who were selected on the basis of their participation in pre-marriage, in the social phenomena of marital life and their participation on arbitration in both types of families, biological families and step families and on the basis of their voluntariness.

Through the interview respondents gave their own life experience in both type of families' orientation, biological families and step families experience. The interview held in open ended question in which the answer of respondent is followed by the researcher other question to have more detailed answer. Interview is categorized as for target group who are directly concerned about the issue and for key informants, who are members of community but are not step families they are religious fathers and local elders.

Interview held in their home and church based on informant's interest to have free talk without place limitation. From ten step mothers seven of them are interested to conduct the interview at church and remaining three are in their home. All (five) step families conducted interview home. Similarly, key informants are interested to have interview in their home. They are expected to respond about the factor that leads to establishments of step families, source of conflict with in step families and between step mother and step children as well as about the adaptation mechanism of step mothers.

The researcher begun to write the findings by brainwashing of our personal opinion about the step families, stepmothers and misconception in order to be free from personal influence i.e. bracketing. On the other hand, brainstorming all the necessary type of question and information needed to be collected. Again all the possible question is forwarded to respondents in order to collect all important data which helps meet the objectives of the research were prepared. Not only generation of data was done; but also sequence of data is done to keep the flow of data. Sometimes researcher ask question immediately respondents answer which need more clarity for discussion part. Also rephrasing of respondent's answer is used to express and have more understanding. When finalizing one question researcher provide chance to say anything remains in his idea.

Other sentence is used by researcher as introduction to express change in question and dealing the next objectives. Time allocation was decided together respondent and researcher based on the question. All questions are open ended type of question.

3.7 Data Analysis Method

From those types of data analysis method narrative data analysis is preferred and used due to the advantage it enables to interpret participant's stories experience and testimonies that are gathered through electronic media and interview. Narrative data analysis is more used and effective in semi structured types of interview which the respondents are accessible to view their opinion freely.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

The first step was getting a letter from Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work. When I received the letter, I forwarded it to another government agency. In addition to this, the purpose of the research is explained to the study participants before data collection. Verbal and written consent was secured and confidentiality of the information was ensured. Data collection was conducted in a separate and quiet room. No payment was made to the participants except for their transportation costs.

Chapter Four

Findings

4.1 What are the reasons for the formation of step families [conflict]?

In marital life there are many ups and downs. While the husband and wife shares life, it is vivid that there are various differences. This could be culture difference, educational disparity, age discordance and others including sexual cheating in marital life and others. When we assess the cause for divorce among the male and the female couples, female [wife], are most of the time considered as the cause of divorce by the community. However, the stepmothers disagree with this connotation. Unable to manage the biological families and following series of rules in marital life is also reason for divorce. Sometimes personal difficulty to continue in marital life is also another reason for divorce. For instance, one respondent had explained the situation as:

“Step families are created due to step mothers in ability to continue with biological family and considered as cheater with father, key factors for establishments of step oriented structure. But woman totally reject such kind of connotation or attachment. We [the] step mothers are taken as wrecker and assumed the reason for breaking down of families, at the same time stepmothers come to such kind of families is in ability to manage biological families who have series of patterns of rule unlike this one which is not managed in common standard.” [Mulunesh]

Extra marital status and sexual dissatisfaction between biological families also leads to establishment of step families. Such kinds problem is more displayed on those individuals who have sexual relation before marriage.

“... I have two friends before marriage and aborted two times. I have really good memory with my previous friends. But also it has its own impact on current life my marriage especially related to sex and child. I can’t have born child. This leads me to divorce and married parson who have child at least person who have question of child”. [Aynalem]

In the same way, search for temporary biological satisfaction as an additional cause for the formation of step families/divorce of the earlier marriage.

“...after I have divorced my first wife I lost two particular benefit which makes me emotional. Cooking food became hard directly affect my economy, at the same time sexual relation also have one key factors which leads me to have remarriage...”. [Tadesse]

Involvements of parents in marriage is one of factors for the formation of step families.

“... my first husbands’ parents have high involvements in our marriage. Even some times he did not decide himself. He consults to parents instead of me. When I ask to have child he asked some advice and reject my ideas. Particularly his mother interferes highly. Such kind of situations leads me to divorce...”. [Genet]

The other respondent

“...really I am angry and I need to revenge my previous husband. He cheats more than three times and now he got married that person. His expectation towards me if I stay alone and he will remarry again...” [Aynalem]

4.2 Myths and Stereotype towards Step Families

Stereotype and myths are common on both among the stepfather and the stepmother. If we take about the extent and degree of both the stepmothers and the stepfather's exposure to myths and stereotype, stepmothers were most of the time vulnerable. Regarding the step family's experience of myths and stereotype we have interviewed those step mothers who have more experience and well informant regarding the issue. We have interviewed their experiences of myths and stereotype towards them, the source of stereotypes and myths, where the stereotype comes and the impacts of it and the most vulnerable parents for myths.

The commonest stereotype and myths reported by the respondents regarding step families include: the women are the cause of divorce when male had second marriage. Meaning the husband divorce his first wife in response of love and affection of other women, Hence, women are the cause for most of divorce in the study are. This can be verified by the respondent as:

Step families as unit they are exposed to myths and stereotype. As respondent respond that different parts of societies have judged us a unit as follows,

"... some parts societies evaluate my families as a unit like we are dysfunctional type families. Conflict is natural in any societies. But the conflict with in my families have unique meaning for them and always they assumed the conflict is due to my family's orientation. The they of family structure is not cause of conflict ...". [Nigus and Mulunesh]

The myths and stereotype continued that step families are not unified even if they are under the same umbrella. According to the respondents this is the most frequent type of myths and stereotype

“... what makes our family disappointed is the irrational judgment and evaluation of our neighbor. They assumed us we are combined for temporal period of time and we do not have family basement like that of biological families. They believed as we are not unified strongly...”. [Genet and Ayele]

Even if the reverse is true according to the interview, some community members believed that step children are the cause for both type of reactions. One of the respondent said that

“... our localities believed that step parents interaction is dependent on the level of step children relation to their respective step parents. Accordingly, if the step children relation is negative the whole functioning of family will be interrupted and the reverse is true. It seems like give and take. Care my child and I will care your child type of relation or a relation in precondition ...”. [Desalgn and Askale]

Frequent conflict and difficulties of family discussion is also simply attached to step families.

“...neighbors have given unique meaning for the conflict between family member unlike that of conflict with in biological family. From the beginning they imagined our family as chaotic family which is exposed to frequent conflict. Not only chaotic but also they believed that discussion if difficult between family member particularly step parents...”. [Beyene and Mebrat]

The extent of the myth and stereotype of the stepfamily varies and it is subjected to hasty generalization, it is also become functional gradually, it is mental negatively drawn picture of the community and fixation. This was reported by respondent:

Key Informants

“...Dysfunctional family disorganized and lack ground rule such kind of family is commonly attached to early. I was one of the people who such kind of attitude and hasty generalization, but this does not mean step families are well organized like that of biologically intact families. The myth and stereotype is not mere exaggeration but not like that of the societies but they are expected to understand step families interact from two previous experience but does not hinder to be functional gradually change is available. But the society draw once a picture becomes fixed, no change in attitude when step families are changed in relation gradually.” (Ato Bayelign)

Frequent conflict is drawn in the mind of step families neighbor, not only conflictual behavior is attached but also difficulties to manage and arbitrate those step families is also simply given to them

“... when I think of my step families’ neighbors’ income and consumption and their personal interest the situation and image printed to my mind is conflict or their disagreement even they stop normal communication for three or four day. This imagination is not random, rather I have experienced in real life”. [Major of 50 Mekeberiyaw]

To some extent myths and stereotype are not mere exaggerations. But the peoples view and the reality in the ground is partially different. The rate and type of conflict between step families and biological family is somehow different.

“... as a religious father I am invited to solve conflict between both types of family orientations, biological family and step family. In fact, in comparison to biological

family it is some difficult to solve problems with in step families. Both parents remind and talk about previous marriage that make the solution complex...”. [Kesis Pawlos]

Both parents live in dread life un like that of biological families. One the step parents informed to key informants indicated such kind of situation is experienced

“...during the discussion with step parents individually in some event one of them talked me that they have dread that my step parents will leave this family which is not reflected most of in biological families. Such kind of symptoms are indication of difficulties for discussions. Some of our localities have not a hasty generalization for step families. But this is not reflected in all step families.” [Aba Samuel]

Generally, stepchildren are the cause of conflict as described in the following way:

“...They are together in one umbrella but not unified having different objective and without shared goal. They joined for temporary satisfaction and will be re divorced. Also assumed as joined for the revenge of previous parent. Both of step parents are here exposed to myths and misconceptions, and step mothers are more exposed to negative attitude. Even though there is difference in ideology, the extent and degree is not as society imagine. The rate of conflict is different from biological, the cause for conflict is partially different and step children are cause of conflict.in addition as my respondent said we have goal commonly not as society said.” [Major of the 50 Mekeberiyaw]

Never the less, all the myths and stereotype towards the step family and the stepmothers are not always the same. One of the key informants had replied as:

“...Step families as usual [are] exposed to myths regardless of type of step families whether it complex remarriage (step families in which both parents have children from previous marriage and simple step families who either of step parents have children. Step families are subjected to myths and stereotype on the basis of their family structure. Some of [the] myths and stereotype are real but some of them are not. There is mere exaggeration meaning all myths are not false...” [Kesis Birle]

4.3 Myths and Stereotype towards Step Mother

According to study informant's stepmothers were considered as boring, brutal, inclined to their biological children, negatively derives the track of growing children, having stepchildren by itself and due to communication problem and negative mentality towards stepchildren.

The community have some fairytale or folklore about step mothers. Such kind of fairytale leads step children to have hast generalization.

“... in my localities hard mountains is expressed through step mother's behavior. Difficult things are best examples to explain step mothers character. Someone who face hard mountains said (this mountain is like my step mother). So the step children have pre imaginations about step mother which have direct influence on the relationship between step mother and step child...” [Haregeweyin]

Also the same respondent said that

“...in step child mentality, I am doing mistake always to create conflict between biologically related child and father in order to push the child to have free step child family...”

The other respondent said the following,

*“...Step children, step children mother and localities have given and attached me with bad image such as I fed up easily, Brutal, boorish, biased to biological child in all aspect and always I am searching (need) conflict with step child in order to drive out from my life track. **But I am doing all the best regardless of status step child. I am trying to act as mother through equal treatment even though he disrespects me and not satisfied in my treatment...**” [Zelekash]*

The term step has its own impact and lead those children to pre-determined relation between step mother and step children. They have experienced the term step with negative connotations.

“...The prefix applied before status of mother has its own limit the interaction between my step children and me (stepmother). Step children were not acting as step children before. But when he starts join community and his friends he gathers some ideas about what is mother and step mother. Changes in behavior are now seen gradually. The prefix [negative connotation of the stepmothers by the community] limits the type of interaction through setting boundary where, how and when to talk with step mother. And also step child starts to reject my order, as you are not my mother and you cannot control me as you wish”. [Asnakech]

What makes and leads me to state of frustration is community have pictured me as brutal in both situations. Wicked step mother in both state of relation with my step children are given. If I tried to give my passion, affection and love to my step child but she did not accept and recognize, I am wicked step mother here. At the same time if I became careless, same attachment

and name is given to me. Such kind of situation leads step mother to more careless. A respondent who is aged... had revealed that:

“Without evaluating and understanding how much effectives are step mothers and who are scarifies more stability of specific house hold society’s views me as boorish and simply through measuring my performance in the step child perspective...” [Etete]

The same way, prefix given to the stepmothers, inadequate interaction between the stepmother and stepchildren, growth and exposure to differentiate of the stepchildren between the mother and stepmother, change of behavior as age increases and actual negative consideration of the stepchildren towards stepmother. Furthermore, measuring the performance of the stepmother by their only way is also an important reason for the formation of step families. For example, one respondent has reported as:

Likewise, jealousy and lack of division of labor is also source of why myths and misconception towards step families. Hence, other respondent had described as:

“I am more exposed to myths and stereotype than the step fathers through the lens of step children and societies. I am exposed to stereotype due to step child case [having], the way act and react, and communication. I loved her father and reject or ignore his biological kid. This is drawn in the mentality of me. They believe me unrealistically wish more resource from step child in terms of her energy, meaning over burden and feed less, and I am careless to her self-adjustment”. I am the worst as she imagines me and jealously to her father. Role division is also key point we come in to conflict.” [Bizuyayehu]

Never the less, the stepmothers had reported that the denial of order of the stepchildren is the main cause for their myths and misconception. In addition, they even reported that

stepmothers even care more than the biological mothers in some circumstances. Similarly, the devaluation of the stepmothers in the community, consideration of stepfather as entirely positive and faultless. A respondent has recalled this as:

“...Surprisingly some step mothers care more step child than biological father without considering the relationship exist whether biological or step. But they are devaluated what makes me amazing is step father still considered as positive and faultless somehow this attitude also displayed in step child that I care more than his father. The step child believed me as less significant for the household and” [Kelem]

Equally significant, there are stepmothers who reported that they are neutral, affected and love the stepchildren; who didn't hate, treat their stepchildren as their own biological children, and blame their stepchildren and who are not careless, focused. Nor is shared by the stepchildren, some of them consider as their father had remarried to evil wife:

“...Honestly I didn't feel as instant as lover with my step child. I don't know what will [occur] in the future. But I did not hate or blame. Currently I want to be neutral, neither to have immediate love nor to blame and hate step child. I am not careless for step children because one of our deals with father is his step child life. But this does not mean I am such focused on his life. I treat step child as one of our family member. Due to limited relation with step child, the step child assumes my father married evil wife.” [Enana]

Having good relation between step mother and biological father have attached negatively. The community have argued that there is something at the back of step mother in order to persuade father. Step mother said the following

“... she goes to magician or wizard to persuade parent. Community replace love by magician. She (step mother) control father through magic not to lose again. Even step mother is the only person attached with magician not the father...” [Mimi]

Moreover, the step mothers were good mothers are taken or considered as trying to replace their biological mother, tried to have strong bond between them, enable effective communication and thought positive as:

“...Step mother who provide good motherhood are trying to replace mother. The reverse is true. I tried to have strong bond between my step children and biological mother. I help and enable to have good communication and spent more time with biological mother. The other myth I faced is when I say give time to your mother, step child believed as I am pushing to leave this home. I was thinking positive but interpreted negatively.”
[Wudye]

The other thing step child believe is, discussion with step mother is hard or difficult due to expecting negative reaction from step mother.

“...I understand some of my step child interests from their (step child) friend in directly, as they told me they (step child) believed that discussion with me assumed as dissipate or defalcate their secret to step mother. On the other hand, they believed informing their interest always followed with by my negative reaction rather than fulfilling their need. If the step children inform me the problem, he draws negative reaction from step mother. But the reverse is true...” [Yeshimebet]

4.4 Effects of Myths and Stereotype on Quality and Stability of Step Families

Myths and stereotype affects step families in numbers of dimensions according to the respondent's response.

".... the way we solve the problem is the other problem. Discussion is difficult especially related to step children. Biological parents inclined to biological child and will hate me in front of the child. Both of us want to free step children step parent. This at least minimize the word (your child). But it is difficult to implement. Hard words are used to solve problem. Even sometimes re divorce is provided as option of solving the problem." [Desalegn and Askale]

Ill treatment of step child in step families also is one of the result followed by myths and stereotypical attitude towards step families.

".... Sometimes I am assuming to such kinds of feeling, my biological child is treated not equally with mother's biological child especially in food and shelter. I understand such kind of things as the child inform me and through child reaction when we are playing at home. Or if my child is at biological parent I hunch or doubt why child is gone to biological parent? Ill treatment will push to leave home temporarily to compensate ill treatment from step parent..." [Ayele and Genet]

Expecting all aspect of life like biological family minimize the level of care to step families. In biologically related family things are going smoothly even series issue are happening.

“devaluating step parents is also one of the effect which stereotypical attitude directly had step families. Step child particularly had such kinds of evaluations on step parents

My step child did not equally treat and understand as biological parent due to stereotype and myths towards me. Stereotypical attitude is from other community member and from step child himself.

Some of the study participants had reported that they have encountered more than one divorce. Hence, the stepmothers are vulnerable to communicate, raise and practice stepchildren frequently.

“I am now divorced for the second time from my remarriage. My step children have totally bad image when it is compared with other step mother and step families. They believed that I am with father for property inheritance and sharing their father property. They did not believe me as wife. Especially step daughter reject me and I am useless step mother. She believed that she can cover the service of step mother. Even they believed I used witchcraft for their father.” [Asnakech]

The other respondent also supported consequence of stereotype and myths of others as follows

“...I was decided to have remarriage to fill the gap I lost from first marriage. But negative attitude towards to my step families especially from my step couple parents is difficult to survive, to be frank I love my husband but he cannot push his parents to have boundary on his life. I have not child but he has one child from previous marriage”. [Mimi]

Feeling unmotherly or being careless towards step families and stepchild also provided as response for what happened due to stereotype and myths

“... I am in state of feeling that lose sense of mother or step mother that really harsh the whole family member. Being step mother or mother is not decided by the mother rather there should be other parties that recognize my stepmother hood and power over families. Due to this fact I act careless to step child and silent whatever things happened is on step child...” [Etete]

Not only feeling un motherly is consequence of stereotype and myths towards step mother, but also losing sense of belongingness to that specific family as responded below

“... frequent myths and stereotype leads me [step mother] to have less feeling of belongingness and state of frustrations to that family which in turn leads demarcating boundary with in my families. Absent of respecting one to the other leads to consider members of family as outsider not as family”. [Yeshimebet]

4.4.1 Being Careless

Step mothers become careless towards step child due to negative attitude of step child to step mom. Even though they expect gradual developed relation, but the reality they face is to the revers they become careless.

“... I was expecting we will have some sort of good relation with my step child that will be developed gradually. But my step child has similar attitude from the beginning of our life up to now may not have change in the future. Step child believed that loving or having good relation with me is taken as hating biological mother”. Now aa day I decide to be careless just step child can do anything. I do only providing humanitarian activity only. [Kelem]

Also the other respondent responded as

“myths and stereotype pushed me to have neither negative nor positive attitude to my step child. We interact each other not as family member rather it is as human being. Sometimes it is impossible to differentiate the relation between me (step mother) and my step child with type of relation between me (step mother) and neighbor. [Wudye]

4.4.2 Frequent Conflict

The real behavior of step mother and the step child expectation of her behavior did not much which in turn leads to frequent conflict.

“... step child has unrealistic attitude towards me which is heard from some other friends about step mother and display his behavior which is not compatible to my treatment to step child. I tried to show all my willingness to have good relation with step child. But her reaction is negative which makes me hot and tantrum. Finally, we have conflicted frequently”. [Haregeweyin]

As a family unit there is continuous disruption due to myths and stereotype towards step mother.

“... representation towards me and what I have is totally opposite. Step child represents me negatively to my relatives and friends. I (step mother) informed to my step child to keep his attitude to his mentality not to talk to others without the reality. But he presented me to his biological father and his friends me as I am boorish which leads me to conflict with he”. [Enana]

The other thing step mother face due to myths and stereotype limitations in participating locally organized intuitions like iqub, idir and the like communal organizations as the informant said the following;

“... the first I am attending in such kinds of institutions was very hard to me, even some segments or members did not accept that I am wife of the person who is registered formally in institution”. [Bizuayehu]

The other respondent also argued as social discrimination was part of my life even though it is for the short period of time.

“.... I am really feeling sad for the rejections of community as a member of idir. Partially they may have fact which is the registration is including both husband and wife. Until they clarify data of house hold they reject me”. [Kelem]

Feeling unmotherly also mentioned as what happened due to myths and stereotype

“...through time I lost my motherhood ness towards my stepchild because the reaction he returns to me is negative ...”

4.5 Why Myths and Misconceptions Are More Towards Step Mothers

Negative attitude, myths and stereotype are more towards step mother is more than other step family's member. All members have equal status the term step. But step mother is more exposed to stereotype.

*“... as step mother it is difficult to live step children. Every community and step child have judged. stepmother irrespective of reality. Step child and step mother have frequent contact than biological father and his child. **Role distribution** is given more from step mother which have significant role to conflict between step child step mother”.*

Biological mother of step child has contribution to myths of step mother. She did not directly involve but in misconceiving step mother but through her biological child,

“... the term GOBAN is used, meaning the person who married others husband. My Goban believed that the key factor for divorce is me [step mother]. She [biological mother] through her child used different bad words to have re divorce and my step child assume me [step child] as the worst to step child”. [Asnakech]

Role division and frequent contact between step mother and step children is also the key factors that increase the rate of stereotype as one of the respondent said as follows,

“most of the time role is distributed not from father rather I [step mother] divided role to all family member especially daily activities that sustain house hold. But step child believed that I am biased to, due to I am more exposed to myths and stereotype of societies and other family member”. [Zelegash]

The neutrality of father is also one of the factor why step mother is more exposed to myths and stereotype.

“... most the time fathers are involved more outside home. Step child have more contact hour with the step mothers. Or less involvements of father help the father to be considered as simple hearted or innocent. [Bizuayehu]

4.6 Cause of conflict between the Stepmothers and the Stepchildren

Conflict didn't occur at random. There are initials i.e. causes. These causes are job distribution between the stepchildren and the biological children, access to food and related issues, having children before the second marriage. A respondent has depicted it as:

“...Reality behind is [the conflict] difference in [the] treatments of biological children and step children in terms of job distribution, food and other issues. Even the step

moms who do not have children from previous marriage [have positive outlook for the stepchildren] and having common children from current marriage love and affection also minimized...[Mimi]

In addition, the cause of conflict is reported as; jealousy towards the relationship between the biological father and his biologic children; perceived by the stepmother. Limited traditionally framed distant communication between the stepmothers and the stepchildren is the main cause expressed by the study participants. This was indicated by a respondent as:

“...When we start new [step] families managing child behavior one if the grater task given to both of us (step parents) chaotic relation and step parents. Our community shakes hand for greeting. This is also common in the family. Through time there is progress and positive change in this regard. But biological families who have printed [previous] once negative image still [consistently] have some restriction on the contact of our step children and their biological children because step children’s behavior may affect their [other] child behavior”. [Haregeweyin]

Again, this was shared by the stepfathers. Interestingly enough; the seriousness of the stepmothers toward the stepchildren, inclination of the stepmother towards their biological children, unpleasant reaction of the stepchild to the stepmothers, tougher stepmother’s expectation of the community, reduced contact hours and kindness of the stepchildren with the stepmothers, inadequate of the strictness of the community, provision of extra free time and freedom were causes of the source of conflict. The stepmothers are tightened between the relationship of the stepchildren and his biological father. This is express as:

“...Step mothers are more series than step farther. The biological mother and are harder towards step child than biological child. Sometimes, due to reaction of my stepchild I am expected to be tougher than his father. The contact hours with biological father and the issue for such kind [of] relation with biological father is less than with contact hour with me. But I am not as imagined strict and limit my step child interest as the step child and society views. When I leave step child and give extreme freedom, peoples said she [is] so careless towards [the] step children. So I am living in sandwich of both extreme ideas.”

[Zelekash]

In addition to the opinion of the stepfather and the stepmother; the stepchildren as the third party shared the opinion by the mouth of the stepmother. The stepchildren were urged to judge negatively prematurely and exaggerating simple mistakes. This was reported by one stepmother as:

“...My step child is close to judge me based on the mistake I commit during household activity. They did no appreciate when positive and right things are performed, but judge when mistake is occurred. Also they assumed me as mistake is done purposely for gaining some benefit. Also in their view simple mistake done by biological mother and father become huge in my case. My step child did not believe about I can learn from my mistake rather believe as I do it frequently to harsh stepchild...” [Kelem]

4.7 Stepchildren Characters

Step children have displayed different characteristics which is not consistent throughout the time and variate depending on daily bases of interaction with different peoples.

“... when my step child spent sometimes with biological mother high behavioral change is displayed towards me increases and try to make comparison between me [step mother] and biological mother which agitate my spiritual rest. I don't want to be compared with any other. Rather I should have evaluated with only my personality special when I am step mother”. [Zelekash]

Rejecting role division is also one of key features displayed on step children and the worst part of behavior of step children according to respondent is rejecting role;

“most of the time my step children reject role division between step families' member. Biological child is more responsible to do tasks that step child reject. Also I did not over push step child by giving more attention to marriage. Source of rejecting such role is belief that step mother are biased and over load step child...”. [Asnakech]

Aggressive and emotional are some other respondent of research respond about character of step child. Hasty attitude towards step mother make them aggressive as responded below;

“step child who are member of my family is too much hot and feel as treated less when compared with other family member. He believed he will get good treatment when he shows aggressive behavior. Sometimes he cries when he memorizes his died mother and becomes emotional which need special treatment...” [Etete]

Talking more outside their home and being silent more inside is displayed in step children.

“...my step child is more active to take and play our neighbor and different ceremonies. But totally such kind of behavior is not available inside the home. Sometimes step child use the home only for eating and clothing as well for sleeping...” [Enana]

Looking step mothers as strange and scornful view towards step mother is also feature of step children

“... whether is it deliberate or not I don’t know, but my step child shows me scorn view and un able to order. Even it is challenge to say eat your lunch or dinner. He considers such kind of questions as failure for himself...” [Yeshimebet]

4.8. Care and Support of the Stepmother towards Stepchildren

Step mothers had also no to less maternal care and support to their stepchildren due to multiple factors. These include: loving the biological father of the stepchildren but fails to care and love the stepchildren, over burdening the stepchildren by job, considering the stepchildren as tireless, feeding them less, lack of stepchildren role division, carelessness of the stepmother is those evaluations attached to step mother simply with the image given to them.

“... due to the fact my step child is under the other step mother I am trying to care my step child in assuming my biological child will receive good treatment form step mother. Always I talked any issue in fronts both child which helps me to show my positive attitude to my step child. I feed family as much possible in the same time which alleviate mentality of biasedness...” [Haregeweyin]

Some step mother does more of job themselves not to order step child or to minimize burden of child.

“I am trying to minimize task and role of step child at least to minimize negative view or lens and increase my treatment to step child which in turn build and maintain smooth family relationship. Trying to understand what step child feel and need and as my potential allows me providing step child interest also is part of my life. But it is hard to

receive similar reaction from step child unless I believed to leave negative reaction and giving some time to rehabilitate to normal thinking...” [Kelem]

4.9 Responses of the stepmothers; Adapting /Coping Strategy

Remaining silent, shared experience from the elder stepmothers,

“But I am doing all the best regardless of status step child. I am trying to act as mother through equal treatment even though he disrespects me and not satisfied in my treatment.”
Without expecting positive rewards, I acted as mother and parent.” [Asnakech]

They are positive towards their stepchildren. However, they are perceived negatively:

“...I am not pushing to leave this home. I was thinking positive but interpreted negatively.”
*My penalty or punishments of step children is considered as pushing step child to leave home, but the reality is shaping behavior. In such kind of situation, I choose to **be neutral** whatever fault is happened.” [Zelekash]*

Other stepmother prefers tolerance, acceptance and adoption of the behavior of their stepchildren followed by demarcation of personal boundary [not intended to disintegrate] and discuss common issues like education. This was depicted as:

“Tolerating, accepting and adopting stereotype and, myths is one of the best ways to cope. This all mechanism if followed by demarcating the boundary between me (step mothers) and step child. Setting boundary does not mean totally breaking relation but this is to mean that we have limited relation. Common issue can be discussed but personal issues like education are not our concern.” [Bizuayehu]

“...To avoid the risk of re divorce, I always tried to keep my feeling internally and to do all the best in order to maintain good relationship irrespective of the response of step child. I tolerate the negative reactions of step children...” [Mimi]

Some of the stepmothers had managed the conflict and complications raised between their stepchild by carelessness and left the biologic child for the management of their biologic father.

“After trying all best solution to maintain stable and useful relation between and step child and me, but if there is no change observed in step child as I expect. I decide to be careless. The only thing what I want is to be abused and insulted. Otherwise he can do any thig and I left step child for biological father. This leads to conflict between me (step mother) and biological father. But I am not concerned whatever step child life is” [Etete]

Concomitantly, this will affect the stepmother in many ways including insult, abuse and less communication between them.

Some of the stepmothers had analyzed the cons and prons of engaging in this type of families. They have analyzed the negative connotation of the community. They tried to understand the feeling and needs of their stepchildren. Some showed positive attitude. Finally, they fed-up with their own treatment of their stepchildren and prefer rejection and ignorance as we have presented earlier. This is also expressed by other stepmother as:

“In fact when I joined or engaged such kind of families I analyze the benefit of step parents with the connotation given to the status of step parents. In all aspects of my step child I try to understand and perform what my step daughter feeling and need. I tried my best to show my positive attitude towards her life and her father. Doing such kind of action is not to receive positive reaction from step child just to maintain stable relation of my

family. But finally the best way I applied is to reject it, not the daughter rather rejecting her stereotyping attitude by considering it is nothing and believe that I am are doing my best for your mentality to my set u...” [Yeshimebet]

“I give a chance to my step child to have open discussion about what is going on and what is the right and wrong action between us although success is bring nothing fruit for family. What I do to solve such kind of problem is asking an experience from the person who is step parents and has relatively secured relation when it is compared with our step child-step mother relation...” [Bizuayehu]

Some stepmothers had shared experience as we have discussed above, tell and search for response with their spiritual father, discuss with elders and engage in persuading and managing equally their stepchildren. They had also arbitrated between the quarrel between their husband and their stepchildren. Hence, a respondent had described as:

“I am not limited on asking experience to adopt myths and stereotype about step mothers. By extending my question, also I asked my parents and religious father including elder of locality what can I do. My step child also part of discussion in finding solution. The biological fathers are also responsible to persuade and change his child attitude for maintaining stability and quality.”

Some of the stepmothers fed up with the condition they face with their stepchildren. this will result in less contribution, saying ‘yes’ for all the quests of the stepchildren in response to persuading them. A respondent has replied as:

“...I accept simply all myths and stereotype forwarded but I did not respond anything to who have any such kind of evaluations and attitude towards me. This is the best option for

me to adopt and survive because I tried to show all my positivity to step child and others who had negatively attached me to negative attitude. What surprised me any positive change in stepchild is given to father who have less contribution, whereas negative behavioral change is directly related with me. So the best way to adopt myths and related views towards me is say yes. Because it is impossible to persuade them”.

4.10 Impacts of step families on Children

As a result of the treatment of the step families’ children face various ranges of complications. These in turn distorts the physical, social, mental, spiritual and emotional wellbeing of the stepchildren. They are subjected for depression, loneliness, being looser, frustration, and school absenteeism. This is also fueled by the badmouthing of the stepmothers with her biological children. One respondent had stated this as:

“...Through time I approach him more in order to talk about the situation but have some challenge to provoke what is going on his life, as he informed me the situation related with step mother and her reaction to the child is so bad and, due to over burden sometimes missing the class, she can no able to provide necessary inputs for his life as she is living in his father’s home, always he talks negative things by comparing he with her biological children...Step child who is living in my neighbor always is in depression and state of frustration. He feels like looser of step families’ formation.”

Similarly:

“I am living with societies which are composed of both step families and biological families. There are some step families who most of the times are conflict especially

because of role of step mother and relation between step mother and step children. Reality behind is difference in treatments of biological children and step children in terms of job distribution, food and other issues related with children. Even the step mom who do not have children from previous marriage and having common children from current marriage love and affection also Minimized.”

School absenteeism of step children are common features. Particularly due to un fair job distribution and low access to food as next step child responded

“...I am grade 9 students. Most of the time I attend the class after losing two or three class. My stepmom over load without considering time of class. Priority is given to job not for class. I feel some times as slave not real member of family. It is difficult to adjust myself.

State of frustration is also one of displayed features on those step children.

“losing biological mother is difficult. I cannot express all my interest and feeling to my step mother as part of that family. I am limited to perform what my step parent ordered me to do. Such situations are repeated on my life. I assumed it as my life long part which leads me to state of frustration.”

One of the step child stated that

‘... I left the home early morning to abscond my step mom negative words and come stay away which makes my step mom happy...”

One of the studies key informant **[Kesis Birle]** said the following

“... step children of one of my spiritual child informed me as he is experiencing the worst life under step families. Instead of thinking about education he is more thinking about daily life related to food and shelter. But step mom rejects this idea and informed me totally the revers of step child ideas.

Even though step mothers argued they are trying to be good step mothers step children are not accepting such kind of ideas. **[Aba Samuel]** reflected that

“...step children who are living in step family orientation is somehow experience bad situation. But this is not real in all step family. I know some step families who have good interaction with each other. Even step children have more positive relation with step mother than with biological father.

The other key informants talked his view **[50 aleka Mekeberiyaw]**

“...yes there is some uncomfortable situation for step child. But the extent that the child talks to others and the real in ground is different. Even some step children are their own problem and simple rejections of step mother...”

4.11 Expectations of the Stepmothers

Stepmothers had different varying expectation when leading step family life. They expect to be accepted as ‘biological mother’. Accordingly, they expect that the change on the behavior of the stepchildren will be gradual. One respondent had shared this as:

“I was expecting an immediate or instant love from my step child and he consider me as mother and to the reverse I was ready to act as mother radically. But not that happen. Rather I was expected to think and act the relation is gradual and slow mood. I am

step mother and must act as step mother with showing positive reaction in order to persuade the step child. What was the right way and what was expected from me simply just is show positive face only for step child and I had understood the process is gradual not radical” [Zelekash]

The other respondent had similarly recalled as:

“When there is negative event[encounter] between step mother and step children I always compare my step motherhood with the other step mother. Without considering family background, I always refer my life with other step mother and step families. This comparison leads me to hate and blame step child and sometimes myself. Also I set boundary between step child and biological child relation which confuse step child. This situation leads step child to assume bias to biological child.” [Etete]

4.12 Recommended Solutions

There are many recommendations forwarded by different parties to correct the relationship between the stepmothers and their stepchildren. Identifying and prioritizing family issues, spending more time with them, willingness to interact, creating and facilitating smooth relationship. One of our respondent had briefly described this as:

“Step mother should identify and prioritize family issue and should spent more time in maintaining good relationship between all step family’s members. As [a] figure of the family; step mother use this chance to create positive mentality and attitude and to show her willingness to interact with family member particularly with step children. I spent majority of my time in creating and facilitating smooth relationship between my step family’s members”. [Bizuayehu]

On the other hand, the same respondent said;

“...As my capacity and potential allows I try to understand what step child interested. Help and enable to have good relationship with biological mother and father who help me not to be considered as jealous and strange. Also this helps my step child to brain wash about me I am sharing step child time with biological father”. [Asnakech]

Taking the positive aspect of life is also recommended:

“Although the reverse is true, as much as possible I talked always positive feature of step child biological parents. Until the step child understand and accept my full membership try to talk positive or be silent about biological parents of step child. Even I faced big challenge when I talked about my previous life experience”. [Haregeweyin]

Avoiding hating the stepchildren and understanding the real behavior of stepchildren is also additional recommendation for better management of stepmother and stepchildren relationship:

“...Until I become accepted member and have recognized power I did not hate step children whatever step children talk. Rather I perceive it as way of understanding the real behavior of step children. I did not show any gesture negatively. Through time my behavior did not show change but step child to some extent have bring some change and in the future will God now. But the system helps me little bit minimize myths and misconceptions”. [Mimi]

Informing step children capacity to do anything also enables to bring change somehow. Do not talk step children powerless and also focus on stepmother positive capacity to survive such heart breaking situation. Try to compensate it with other points. Call step child like your

biological child, do not differentiate biological child and step child. Also invite in any discussion of family push to say something which is showing sense of ownership and belongingness. One informant has told us:

“I informed always about step child capacity to do anything which helps me in acting as supporter like biological mother. In fact, it is impossible to be helped to avoid I am alone in step child mind. There is a person who can help me, at least step child to some extent minimize loss of biological mother. On the other hand, I invite in all home meeting even in celebration I informed stepchild can invite friends which create sense of belongingness.” [Yeshimebet]

Chapter Five

Discussion

Marriage is one of the building blocks of nation, so is not expected to be divorced with silly and single reason which harms from individual level up to state level because at least there is children which is the one of the result of marriage. Divorce have high risk on family member. But without first marriage and divorce there is no the so called step families which is directly related with remarriage. It is possible to say step is child of first marriage. The prefix “**step**” is applied for those parents who have previously engaged to marriage and are now parents for child who do not have biological affection. Step families are vulnerable to negative attitude, myths and stereotype than biological families also step mothers are greater exposure for stereotype than other step families’ member.

Myths and stereotype towards step families according to the respondent’s and key informant response the extent and degree is different on the bases of formation of step families. Step families created due the death of one of the parents is less judged negatively than step families that is created on the bases of divorce (Spanner & Frustenberg, 1987) argued as even the name of step families is different depend on way of establishments of step families. The community around step families have its own name for those step families formed through death and divorce. Parallel to that degree of stereotype if not the same.

The first objective covered under this study is exploring myths and stereotype towards step families. Number of conclusion can be drawn based on the finding and result from respondent answer. Even though the sample is small in number the researcher finds enough data that can enables to conclude and got meaning full finding that can be generalized. In-depth

interview with those step families gave and reveal insight that step families are more exposed to myths and stereotype than biological families. They are assumed by other societies member as, they are living together without unification, and they do not have similar interest, they are imagined as conflictual type of families, they fight with easy and simple reason, they are difficult to arbitrate, they are also attached with lack of societal and family guide that can manage members. Cherlin, (1978) also acknowledge that step families are incomplete institution that lacks type of regulation which is applied commonly for all family member. Draughon (1975) also approved as lack of clear setting of role division affect why step families are exposed to stereotype and myths. (Comb & Herndon,1982) recognized the absence of legal relationship when they are compared to biological family which is similar to this research finding.

Respondents during interview also shared their ideas that is assumed by others in terms of degree of functionality, the way they care step child as hassle tussle also attached to them. Leyen, et al., (1994) approved that step families are not functional or they are dysfunctional, difficult area for child self-adjustment, chaotic child care system are features of step families. The finding that step families are they are dysfunctional is also supported by the previous study they are in ambiguous role division and lack of clarity in terms of relationship between family members Stewart, (2005). Coleman, et al. (1988) in their finding concluded that step families are exposed to unrealistic representation and stereotype irrespective of their real life. Biological type of families and single parent families have such kind of attitude towards step families.

Bayton, (1941) and Sticks, (1965) argued that step family orientation has greater chance to vulnerability of myths and stereotype. They are simply exposed due to family structure is key that leads to stereotype and hasty generalization without analyzing the reality of step families' life. Biological families are attached to positive features even though they are in state of conflict

they are not negatively judged and considered as normal state of families. (Bryan, 1986) acknowledge that family structure has important role whether to be negatively evaluated and exposed to myths and stereotype. In such a way step families are accordingly exposed to negative attitude simply without questioning and understanding their degree of stability and quality. Miller. et al, (2017) acknowledge that family structure leads for myths and stereotype as they are unstructured form of family than those biologically oriented form of family.

Also step parents and step children are viewed as less interacted and always are followed by negative reaction to each other. Jones, (1978) discussed that step families are sophisticated, complicated and have great interpersonal and intra personal problem and believed as deviant form of families' structure.

Cheriln, (1978) analysis of step families and his argument incomplete institution is displayed almost in all step families' stereotypical attitude towards them. Step families are represented unrealistically with following features. Societies believed that step families are born of lose, type of families living in the same umbrella without unification and shared vision, give and take type of relation and love particularly related to step child, care my child then I will care yours, as step families are merged from previous marriage every parents are trying to load other ways of life on the other, confusing and chaotic type of child caring system, disorder relationship between family member, stressful house hold, less feeling of belonging ness, easy to breakdown, difficult functioning communication, created due to less educational back ground, variable family rule based on parents interest, carelessness towards step children, infertile ground for step child self-adjustment, ambiguity and jealous type of relation confused role division, also step families are in challenge to create intra familiar relation with neighbor are some of myths and stereotype that are literally given to step families as respondents informed. Leyen, et.al (1994)

also described that step families as conflictual in every aspect of life, difficult to communicate unable to understand each other's feeling, as step family parents are not transparent on to the other, difficult environment to care child and step child. Miller, (2006) recognized in research as step families are problematic, less functional and less healthy type of families. Jensen, et al, (2017) also acknowledge that step families are in assumption of common stressor feature as they are conflicting family structure, they have limited type of family relationship ambiguous contact and uncertainty in child life. (Jones, 2003) deals about step families have no clear set of role division that makes them conflictual as discussed above have same finding with this research.

Myths and stereotype has direct influence on the quality and stability of step families that affect quality and stability of step families are also the other portion of this research. Accordingly, lower expectation of step children and devaluating the step family member is one of the finding of this study. Similarly, (Fosco, 2014) recognized that devaluation of step parents from view of step children is mentioned as key result which emanate from myths and stereotype to each other's that interrupt quality and stability of step families.

The other finding regarding this issue is ill treatments of step children from one of the step parent is taken as critical issue which is considered one of the result comes from stereotype and myths towards stepfamilies which has direct impact on quality and stability of step family. The research finding setting boundary between step children and step parent is also recognized by the research (Jensen, et al, 2017) which argues delineating and demarcating boundary with in the same family directly affect quality and stability of step families.

These study also explored that role division between family members, increasing contact hour between step children and step mother, unrealistic representation towards step mother are

key factors that increase why myths and stereotype are towards step mother more than the other step families' member? Step parents has the same status "Step" but more negative attitude is on step mom all step mother who are included under the interview have almost similar response as they are exposed to myths and stereotype.

Some of the respondent did not specifically identifies what are those myths and negative attitude towards step mothers. Also they have similar attitude about step mothers are exposed to myths and stereotype they still cannot specify why they are myths. From the study respondent's role division, unrealistic expectation and unrealistic representations are key factors why step mothers are more vulnerable to negative attitude than step fathers. Step mothers have not clearly defined role given with the position they hold. As positions determine the role step mother are in confusion to whether to act as mother or step mother. Also gender determined role have significance impact on them. Weaver and Coleman, (2005) reported about confusing role of step mother.

Negative attitude and stereotypical view towards stepmother is mostly related with role and step children behavior. The contact hour between step mother and step children is greater than contact hours between biological father and child who is directly related through blood and more responsible to care. Miller, (2006) acknowledge that step families as a unit and step mother particularly are rejected and view through lens of stereotypically. Mac Donald & Demaris, (1996) also have similar results to this research that role given to step mother particularly caring children is key factor for myths and stereotype towards step mother than other families. The role given to step mother is not clearly defined and have no clear set unlike that of biological father whose child have negative concept to his wife and step parent for the family. Her (step mother) power over the step child is in confusion. Draughon (1975) also recognized step mother face

harder life than other members of families. Lahitinen, et al., (2020) argued that most difficult position in step families is given to step mother which have direct relationship for exposure of myths and stereotype. Whether to act as mother, step mother or maid is determined by other step families' member not gender give role is exercised. Also sense of belongingness has significant impact on increased myths and stereotype towards step mother. Does step mother really feel mother hood and full member ship to step families? Belongingness is determined by both parties step mother and the other who recognize step mothers' membership. Dunny and Donova, (2021) step motherhood and role given as base of position increase the rate and degree of negative view and myth. Step mother may lose lack of focus.

Here as respondent informed, not only role division confuse but also selecting which comes first also depends not only her interest but also other participants. As well working in cooperation with other family member also exposed to myths and misconceptions They feel my question to work in cooperation is lack of knowledge and capacity. The other one responded role given to step mother was role that other members are not interested to perform in a numbers of reasons. Coleman, (2005) reported that step have no specific job description in step families. Rather based on situation step mother's role is interchangeable and family members expect based on not the task given only but also situational interest is evaluated. Sometime step mother act as maid, in other time as outsider, also they are expected to act as extra mother. Holloway, (2017) acknowledge that role division have greater impact on step mother. The power given to step mother limited them how to act, what to do how to perform and react.

Also how step child view step mother has significant determine how to and what to do. Respondent said that the word used by step child determine what I am expected to do. Because if

the looks me as mother I am expected to do like their imagination. The major problem is not doing the role but the expectation and the real exercise did not much.

Similar to this research as step mothers have greater exposure to myths and stereotype than other members of step families. Fine. (1986) also argued step mother is the most vulnerable to stereotype than others. Step mothers as discussed earlier they are exposed to greater chance to be exposed to negative attitude and stereotype than other step families' member. They (step children) are assumed me (step mother) as Mother of mistake one of the respondent Haregeweyin argued the statement step child believe I always made mistake deliberately. Step mothers are boorish; step child express such stereotype as I am Boorish Like My Step Mother. Miller, et al., (2018) recognized the wicked step mother, step mother's extent of her wicked character in mind of step child. To express step child themselves behavior they (step children) compare and use step mother as best example. So such kind of behavior is inherited from step mother. Step mothers are mean, step child and other members of societies express step mother as mean. When they step child face challenging part of life or hard road they express it as it is mean step mother.

Step mother is attached to series things or challenging issues. Hard mountains are directly example of step mother that cannot be pushed rather push step child to leave the home. Step mothers are the early mistress of current husband. Societies and previous wife believed that before divorce happened with previous wife considered step mothers as second or mistress wife and now married that person. Societal view towards step mother also continued as they are like dragnet or trailer, especially those step mothers who are economically dependent on husband. Montgomery (2016) also described step mothers as clueless step mother. As respondent

informed researcher we are assumed as mother of mistake. Sometimes step mom did mistake deliberately and cannot learn from previous marriage.

Respondents of the study have common response about what happened due to myths and misconception towards? They argued that feeling unmotherly, re divorce, feeling carelessness, lose sense of belongingness and setting boundary are the most common results followed by myths and stereotype from others towards step mother. Step mother who are exposed frequently for stereotype and myths feel like they are not neither step mother nor mother. Just both of parties, step child and step mother are living in the same home neutrally. No body interfere in life of each other. Miller, et al. (2017) described previously about step mother's mentality due to stereotype on step mothers. Re divorce also happen in step families again due to unlimited and unrealistic myths and stereotype towards step families and step mothers. Incompatibility between step family's member specially between step mother and step children finally concluded with re divorce. Gjelten, (2001) earlier described it as lack of commitment and imbalance between demand from step child and supply from step mother leads to re divorce. Lose sense of freedom is resulted due to negative views and evaluations towards step mothers. Weaver and Coleman. (2005) acknowledge in their research as step children lost their freedom to speak in their step families setting.

Lose of family belongingness from both sides, step mother and step children also other consequence of unrealistic view towards step mother. Step mother did not recognize the full member ship of step children. But this does not mean she did not accept the biological children of her step parent. Neglecting belongingness expressed in many ways like over burden by assuming maid, less feeding. At the same time step child also reject step mother as mother and full membership for that family. Ganong, et al. (2017) also recognized that step mother

sometimes reject that membership of step child as per her mood. Such kind of situation is resulted from stereotypical attitude of one to the other, step mother to step child and step child step mother.

One and the most basic reason why step mothers are exposed stereotype and myths than other step parents within the same family is related with step children. There is frequent conflict between step mother and step child. Here biological father is neutral and sometimes being side of step mother based on his mood. The main factors mentioned by step mothers and some step children that lead to conflict between family member is job distribution among step children and biological child seems biased in mentality of step child, food and shelter delivery, jealous toward biological father, lack of good communication, unpleasant reaction of step child towards step mother are key factors for conflict between step child and step mother. Some other explained as step child belief that loving step mother mean hating biological mother. Martin. (2009) recognized as step children attitude towards step mother is directly related with biological mother. They express their love towards biological mother through hating step mother. Possessiveness and jealous of father also mentioned in early research of Martin (2009).

In order to maintain smooth and good familiar relationship between and within step families step mother are one of the major actor whose coping strategies and its implementation are important and significant role from all step families' member. Step mother who are incorporated under this research have responded different adopting mechanisms and strategies which is implemented based on the frequency and source of myths and stereotype. Tolerating myths and stereotype, adapting, accepting, rejecting (giving less attentions), sharing experience from others like step mother and step mother, sharing myths and stereotype for both couple and ignoring negative views is common measures that are taken in order to survive and cope such

kind of attitude. After applying such mechanism, finally demarcating boundary between those people who have myths and stereotype and who is exposed to such kinds of attitude is last measure which is concluded by re divorce.

Tolerating step child includes that believe step child are under new family structure that may affect for few times and until they adopt such families they have negative attitude towards new family member. Miller, et al. (1985) described tolerating myths and stereotype as well negative attitude is one of the method to live and adopt. Using humor also applied in some area of step mother as coping strategies. Conway, et al. (2005) Step mothers also understand their biological child is in other step families and step mother. Adapting negative evaluations and myths as way of surviving mechanism is also applied by step mothers, by taking stereotype and myths is inalienable parts of step mother and making step mothers themselves flexible with step child behavior step mothers try to adopt such kinds of attached character. Also some step mothers use reject and ignore stereotype as best mechanism to survive and maintain step families long live. Some of the step mother apply sharing experience of myths and stereotype as it is forwarded for both parents and finding solution is implemented to survive.

If the couple share step mother feeling it is possible to find solution. Iafrate. R, et al (2012) discovered dyadic coping strategies to cope up negative judgement towards step mother is for both couples. Sharing experience and searching help from step mother who have experienced such kind of life is implemented as coping strategies in step mothers who are incorporated under the study. Also Miller, et al. (1985) acknowledge such kind of coping mechanism applied by step mothers. Finally step mothers decide to have boundary between step mother and step children if all the above mentioned methods are not bringing expected goal to cope with societies negative view towards step mother. They tried to do all the bets for step child but if they are not

successful what they implement is demarcating boundary which is not as such valuable way but they use it as last option at least to live with step parent.

Chapter Six

Conclusion, Implication and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

A family is a nation's smallest but most basic functional unit, from which intellectuals emerge and the state's sustainability is maintained. There is no family without marriage. Our globe is a place where many types of marriage exist and individuals live together with varying degrees of perception and attitude. Divorce is a common feature of many marriages, regardless of political orientation, culture, educational background, religion, language, or race. Marriages end in divorce for a variety of reasons. Some of the reasons are sexual discontent, adulterous status, religious shift, economic troubles, limitless parental participation, and other challenges.

Divorce leads to remarriage, which is the way how step families are created. However, it is not the only reason for separation, the death of one parent can also be considered another reason. Based on cultural views, and religious preach, societies have different attitudes and evaluations towards divorce and the family created after divorce. Most of the time people have a negative attitude toward step families particularly evolved through divorce than evolved through death. Instead of considering step-families as one of the diversified forms of marriage and family structure, societies have unrealistic views, stereotype, and myths about such kind of oriented families. The community has viewed step-families as born of loss.

Society compares the stepfamily type of orientation with the single parent type of structure and biologically intact families which increases the degree and extent of myths, stereotype, and negative judgments also the lens they use to view step families and biological families also factors that increase negative looking towards step families. Instead of accepting

and viewing step families as diversified and one way of life of people, step families are vulnerable to hasty and exaggerated myths and stereotype. But all negative views and stereotype are not mere negative evaluations. There is a fact to some extent but it is overblown.

The quality and stability of step families are influenced by different factors. The most important conflicting issues in step families are the inclination of the biological parent to a biological child, unequal participation in the child caring system, and feeling of ill-treatment perception of stepchild and inconsistent behavior of stepchild leads to a debate between step parents.

Of the stepfamily's members, the stepmother is the most exposed family member to myths and stereotype as well as negatively judged member and vulnerable to myths. There are different stereotype and myths attached to stepmothers irrespective of the reality on the ground. Stepmothers are like any other mother who has a child from previous marriage but due to the role and status given to her, she is simply exposed to an unrealistic image which leads to a state of frustration and carelessness regarding motherhood status that in turn affects the family structure as a whole. It is clear that the mother is the backbone of one family, similarly, step families are dependent on the stepmother's role but they give only role and attached role division without positive reaction to her performance. Failure is given to the stepmother and success is to other members like the father.

Stepmothers feel different types of feelings that can excrete the family. While some feel careless others feel unmotherly hence limiting their relations with their stepchildren. They then set boundaries between family member connections based on respective families' member reactions to her. As the backbone of the family, the stepmother's failure direct leads to the failure

of the family. This is because when mothers are exposed to myths and stereotype the consequence is divorce, being careless, and frequent conflict which has a direct impact on all members of step-families.

6.2 Implications

6.2.1 Implication of Study for Social Work

Working with family social workers varies according to family orientation. Family structure has a significant influence on all family members' lives, which is closely tied to cultures and countries. The original mother and stepmother did not treat the children equally. Children growing up in biological families and children growing up in step families exhibit distinct behaviors, which influence their attitudes toward family, society, and nation.

Understanding the family context is key for intervention and providing empowerment. The type of family determines the type of intervention. Step-families who are subjected to myths and misconceptions are not treated in the same way as single-parent or biologically oriented families. The problems that arise between step families and biological families are not the same, which has a direct impact on the manner and type of intervention. Misconceptions about step families have resulted in negative consequences for members of step families. For example, if parents' divorce, a stepchild will become a street child, affecting the child's health and education, and step families will experience frequent conflict. Social work and social workers should contextualize their interventions according to the type of family. In addition, when working with children in school, social workers distinguish between different types of children, such as stepchildren and biological children. Stepchildren face greater difficulties than biological children.

6.2.2 Implication for Policy Maker

Policy maker should understand the community who implement and who are the beneficiaries from that policy. So every policy has designed in accordance with the types of society. Step families need some specific social policy that provide social protections like food for step children, protections from discriminations are some of the points policy makers must consider while they are designing policy. Also designing legal frame work for the sec of protection of right and providing social service.

6.2.3 Implication for Research

Those researchers who wants to carry out study on step families and step children can use this paper as initial ideas for their study. Issue of step families need more and more investigations in Ethiopian context which is the least subject area which needs more detail and deep study. This paper will give some insight what to do on step families.

6.3 Recommendation

According to the report, regardless of the realities of their life, step families are subjected to myths, misunderstandings, and unfavorable attitudes. To ease such kind of negative connection, members of step families, particularly stepparents, have been required to work on enhancing their good characteristics for those parts of society that have an irrational and unrealistic picture of step families.

Working with office of women and child affairs is one and the best solution in order to create awareness what the step families are, how they are living how they are created and to show the positive side of step families. Also it is better to work with social institutions like *idir*

and iqub not to be discriminated and also it is the best way to maintain positive socialization. On the other hand, schools have their own contributions in shaping children mentality

Step families are supposed to enable open discussion between and among their members to gain a clear knowledge of their members' interests and feelings toward one another. This will also help to recommend a remedy to the incorrect understanding of stepparents. And as the father is the intermediary between the two family members, he must develop a seamless relationship between a stepchild and stepmother. Increasing fathers' roles and engagement, as well as decreasing stepmothers' exposure to myths and misunderstandings, is critical to lowering unrealistic perceptions and prejudices about them.

Stepmothers are more exposed to negative attitudes and myths according to the study. So they are more responsible to change such types of attachment given to them. This is better to be performed in two ways. First, if there are real misconceptions and myths attached to the real behavior they need to modify their behavior that expose them to myths. If misconceptions and myths are without understanding the real life of step families as well stepmothers, they should keep consistently their positive feature whatever reaction is received from any externals.

Stepmothers, on the other hand, are advised to participate in the following activities to combat stereotypes and misconceptions about them. By minimizing expectations of favorable responses from the biological families and other sections of society, and concentrating on becoming a good parent. Sometimes, until the stepchild discovers the true nature of the stepmother's acts and attitude, they may question family membership.

Minimizing blaming of stepchildren's biologically related parents also mitigates the rate and extent of myths and stereotype, particularly from stepchildren and stepchild's biological

mothers. Such kind of measures is also supported by pushing stepchild to spend some time with their biological mother which plays a significant role in shaping the mentality of biological mother and father about stepmothers also other recommended solutions for stepmother.

Minimizing conflict between and within step families' member is also one of the best rules that can be applied and prevent and protect myths and stereotype. At the same time being neutral during the conflict between biologically related members of the family is one of the methods which can minimize myths and stereotype. If the stepmother becomes on the side of one of the members, the other member will judge step mother negatively.

Maintaining a positive relationship between stepmother and stepchildren is also one of the what to do for the stepmother. Rather than showing the power relationship between stepmother and stepchildren it is better to build friendly interaction to have myth and misconception-free contact.

Show that you are unbiased between stepchildren and biological children, and try to facilitate discussion scenarios in front of all family members to have a fair and clear understanding of the role division between a stepchild and biological children. Try to minimize the burden on the stepchild until a smooth relationship is maintained. Also avoiding blaming stepparent in front of stepchildren, such kind of communication will interrupt stepchild behavior.

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Annex-1

I. Participant information consent sheet

II. Consent sheet for Participant

One of the main part of research is giving clear information about what the research objective is? Researcher should have deliver full information about the target of research, target group of research and the impact of research.

1- Title of Research

Exploring the Myth and Stereotype Towards Stepmothers and its Impact on The Quality and Stability on Step Families in Merhabete Woreda.

2- Backgrounds of Study

One of the form of family in the world is step family, but the most exposed to from other types of family. This paper will aim to explore myth, stereotype and negative attitude that are mainly towards step mother and the way how it affects the stepfamilies that interrupt the livelihoods of that particular family.

3- Who were Participants

The participants invited here to take part in this paper is peoples that live in the form of step family. So you are members of the research through delivering all necessary question based on your full of interest.

4- Methods of Data Collection

The data will collect through in-depth interview and key informant interview that may require frequent contact between researcher and participant to have all comprehensive data about the issue. But the time will be set in the interests of you that enables to have freedom which helps you to feel free. On the other hand, if you are willing to have audio, photo and video recorders to be applied, it may be one of the way of data collection.

5- Potential risks under the research

As the major significance of the research is for educational purpose, there is no risk that will face you. But you have the right to stop taking part of information giving when you not good by looking back of your life.

6- Confidentiality

All data you provide for the researcher remains in between of you and researcher. But if there is need of sharing information for more clarification, it is based on your permission only.

7- With Whom Can You Contact for More Information

Any time you have the right to communicate with the researcher. So you can use the following telephone number, +251920010169 and +251969139591. As option you can also contact with e-mail address, andinetegetaw@gmail.com.

Based on the above explanation about the research,

- 1- I understand the title of study
- 2- I understand the objective and significance paper
- 3- I have full information about data collection mechanism
- 4- Potential risk management

5- I understand about confidentiality of data collected

6- I know with whom can I contact.

7- I agreed to take part in research with my interest

Name

Signature

Date

Guiding Interview for Research Participant

Questions for Step Families

Age Sex.....Education.....Duration in first marriage and second marriage Number of children from first marriage Number of child from second marriage

1. How you form step families, is that due to death or divorce?
2. Is there any myths and stereotype towards your family due to family structure?
3. If there are such kind of myths and stereotype towards, what are those attitude?
4. Who is the most exposed to myths and stereotype from members of family?
5. What impacts it has on your life and how your families cope to maintain relationship?

Questions for Step Mother

Age Education Duration in first marriage Duration in second marriage Children from first marriage children from second marriage

1. Are you exposed to myths and stereotype due to your status “step mother?”
2. What are those myths and stereotype towards you?
3. Which parts of community has myths and stereotype type of attitude towards step mother?

4. What impact they have on your family?
5. Why do you think you are the most exposed to myths and syereotype than the other members of families?
6. How step mother viewed in traditional perspectives and local institutions like idir and iqub?
7. What strategies and adaptive mechanisms you implement to adopt or survive myths and stereotype towards you?

Question for Key Informants / local elders and religious fathers/

1. What do you think about step families type of structure?
2. What comes first to your mind when you think about step families and step mother?
3. What do you hear about step families and step mother from other including step children?
4. What negative attachments do you hear and have towards step families and step mother?
5. How step families and step mother involved in traditional institutions of localities?

