

**Psycho- Social Impacts of Traditional Marriage on Women in Wolaita, Kindo Didaye Woreda**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Psycho- Social Impacts of Traditional Marriage on Women in Wolaita, Kindo Didaye**

**Woreda**

**By: Meron Kebede**

**May, 2017**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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**By: Meron Kebede**

A Research Thesis Submitted to the School of Social Work, Addis Ababa University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Masters of Social Work

**Advisor: Mesay Gebremariam (PhD)**

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Approved by the Board of Examining Committee

Examiner.....Signature.....Date.....

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## **Psycho- Social Impacts of Traditional Marriage on Women in Wolaita, Kindo Didaye Woreda**

### **Statement of the Author**

First I declare that this thesis is my original work and that all source of materials used for this study is duly acknowledged and the thesis is not submitted to any other University anywhere for the award of any academic degree, diploma or certificate. This thesis has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for MA degree in Social work at Addis Ababa University and is kept at the University library to be available to borrowers under the rule of the library.

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Name Meron Kebede

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date of submission \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Psycho- Social Impacts of Traditional Marriage on Women in Wolaita, Kindo Didaye Woreda**

### **Abstract**

*Traditional marriage is widely practiced in Wolaita. It has several harmful effects on the overall wellbeing of women who are not mentally, psychologically, emotionally or physically prepared for a marriage life. The intensity of the problem has not been identified particularly for women in Wolaita where the problem is very high. Therefore, this study thoroughly analyzed the result of a qualitative assessment to explore the types of traditional marriage and its psycho-social impacts on Wolaita women. The study is also believed to raise awareness on the relationship between traditional marriage and psycho-social impacts on women in Wolaita. The findings show that most women who undergone through traditional marriage had experiences of depression, anxiety, feeling of immaturity, and have a negative perception about husbands and marriage. In contrast, few women perceived that undergoing through traditional marriage is a means for respecting Wolaita culture. The discussion shows women who undergone through traditional marriage had a messy future about their future life development in anticipating both the challenges and thinking their backgrounds. However, the discussion shows that there are still vagueness and ambiguity on impacts of traditional marriage in which some women didn't recognize the psycho social impact due to their marriage type. Based on the finding and discussion, providing "post marriage counseling" for women who undergone traditional marriage, the need for familial coaching, establishment of women to women group in the community and training on identification, referral and treatment of vulnerable women are recommended.*

**Key words:** *traditional marriage, psycho-social impact, cultural- practice, women, family*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

Ethiopia is a heterogeneous country with over eighty different ethnic groups distributed in different regions. Every ethnic group has particular cultural beliefs and practices that play a predominant role in shaping behavior and determining the action of members of the society.

Marriage is one of the cultural activities that differ from one ethnic group to the other. It is the fundamental factor in establishing family life and promotes someone's course of moving from early life stage to adult hood. When we view the entire range of past and present, human societies' marriage can be described as culturally approved relationship union of one man and one women (monogamy), of one man and two or more women (polygamy). Now a day, same sex couples are also interested in marriages, (homo sexuality). Marriage ceremony is a cultural endorsement of sexual intercourse between the marital partners of the couple and generally by the expectation that children will be born of the relationship (International encyclopedia of Social science 1977 cited in Gemechu and Assefa, 2006).

To obtain the approval of the society, it is necessary that the union be formed and recognized in accordance with the unwritten customs and taboos, as in traditional societies, or in according societies (western mark 1977). The customs of marriage differs in various part of the world and every civilization produces a marriage pattern appropriate to itself (Loudlow, 1965 cited in (Gemmechu and Assefa 2006).

Marriage is an important means of family alliances beyond one's own kin group; marriage transforms relationships and conveys certain right. Marriage establishes legal percentage of children. It spouse rights to each sexuality labor, property and it establish a social relationship, (an official relationship, and affinity) between spouse and each other's relatives. Many societies permit the plural marriage. The two kinds of plural marriage are polygamy and polyandry. The former involves multiple wives. The latter, multiple husbands; polygamy is much more common than polyandry. Marriage mainly divided in to two: monogamy and polygamy.

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Marriage is a social institution that formalizes certain aspects of relationship between male and female. It is an institution that evokes in us deep – scanted emotions about questions of right and wrong, good, and evil and traditional versus modern within families' argument, many occur about what is appropriate premarital behavior, what is marriage ceremony and how long should it last (Peter, 2010).

Although those arguments may be traumatic for parents and offspring and across cultural perspectives, they generally involve minor deviations from the cultural norms. In contrast anthropology text books describe amazing varieties of marriage, systems that fulfill both biological and social functions (Aron Podlefsky and Peter J. Brown, 2001 p. 204).

Ethiopia is an ideal site for studying marriage custom because it is characterized by extensive agro- ecological, ethnic diversity with different religion and with wide diversity. Different religions with wide views regarding matrimonial issues and the status of women are well represented and tend to dominate different parts of the country. The orthodox church of Ethiopia in the north, sunny Muslims in the east and west, recently converted protestant in the south and animist believers in parts of south have their own way of marriage culture. The ethnic and cultural make up of the country is also quite varied with Semitic tradition in the north, Cushitic tradition in the south and east and Nilotic traditions in the west (Champs and Quisumbing, 2004).

Ethiopia is an ancient country with a rich diversity of peoples and long proud of their tradition and independence. Ethiopia is also a country of various ethnic groups with diversified cultural and traditional and cultural practices that have negative impact on the society, particularly women and children. These traditional practices particularly affect women not to effectively exercise their human rights in their socio-economic, cultural and political life.

Traditional practices are deep rooted in the country and are passed from generation to generation. According to the national policy on women that was issued by the transitional government of Ethiopia in 1993, sixty percent of Ethiopia's population is affected by a number of harmful traditional practices which women's share of victimization is by far greater (office of the prime minister 1993;p 71).

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As Wolaita is one of the over eighty nation and nationalities with different background and way of life, has peculiar culture. Marriage is one among those cultural issues that reflect the culture of a given society. Therefore, this paper aimed at making explicit explanation on psycho-social impact of the traditional marriage practices on women in the family of Wolaita community.

According to Wolaita Culture, Tourism and Government Communication (2014), in Wolaita, marriage is seen as a way to improve the family, to strengthen ties between families. This qualitative study will, therefore, try to assess the psycho-social impact of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita. Traditional marriage is selected for this study because of the practice and associated problems in the area under study.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Even though some research studies are available in relation to early marriage, much study has not been conducted on the psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage on women in Ethiopia. There are different informal marriages and all these have consequences on women and girls who have been undergoing in that types of marriages. The 2005 Council of Europe study, for instance on Forced Marriage in Council of Europe Member States, uses a very broad definition according to which forced marriage constitutes an: umbrella term covering marriage as slavery, arranged marriage, traditional marriage, marriage for reasons of custom, expediency of perceived respectability, child marriage, early marriage, fictitious, bogus or shame marriage, marriage of convenience, unconsummated marriage, putative marriage, marriage to acquire nationality and undesirable marriage – in all of which the concept of consent to marriage is the issue.

On the other hand, for instance, the customary practice of arranged marriage is said to differ from forced marriage in that in the former case, while no direct consent may be expressed by the parties to the marriage, their consent is indicated through the leading role played by their families or parents in negotiating the marriage process while marriage is solemnized in accordance with established rituals and practices.

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According to Solomon (2006) tradition and culture have big influence on the bride for virgin when the marriage takes place. Because the bride virginity is highly valued and pride in Christian marriage with whom family being shamed if the bride is not virgin at marriage. Rural women in particular tend to marry at an every young age than their husbands. In the past it used to be the custom for the bride groom to be 30 years of age before beginning his public ministry. Many studies have been conducted on the economic aspect of traditional marriage. Financial transactions around marriage contribute to the practice. In contexts where bride wealth or bride price is practiced (i.e. a groom or groom's family provides assets to the bride's family in exchange for marriage), families may reap immediate economic benefits from marrying their daughters. In such cases, families may obtain a greater financial amount the younger the bride is. In circumstances where dowry is practiced (the bride's family provides assets to the groom's family), a younger and less educated bride may require a lower dowry, which would incentivize parents to marry daughters at a younger age. When parents marry off their daughter, there are often economic and social reasons for them to make that choice. However, the short-term economic reasons that influence parental choice do not serve the long-term interests of girls

On the other hand, traditional marriage is rooted in socio-cultural practices and religious beliefs in many communities, but beyond stylized facts, the relationships between faith and traditional marriage are complex and change depending on the community (Gemignani and Wodon, 2015).

Thus, the research issue is not yet explored; the other factors that made the researcher to focus on this study are to identify the traditional marriage type of Wolaita community and its impact on psycho-social wellbeing of women in Wolaita. This is mainly because the researcher both as social worker and grown in the area under study has observed various problems related to traditional marriage and hence decided to study the traditional marriage and its psycho-social impact on women. The other reason is that to the extent of researcher's assessment, there are some research conducted in the area such as effects of traditional arbitration and legal divorce on divorcees and their children by Tadele Tadesse in Boloso Sore Woreda and assessing the role of women in Wolaita family in Sodo Zuria. However, there was no research conducted specifically on the psycho-social impact of Wolaita traditional marriage on women in Wolaita

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particularly in Kindo didaye in a more scientific way. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring the relationship between traditional marriage and its psychosocial impacts on women's in Wolaita so as to make the necessary intervention through various community service projects in collaboration with pertinent stakeholders.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

In view of the aforementioned problems, this particular research will answer the following research questions. These are:

1. What are the major types of traditional marriages that occur in Wolaita, particularly in Kindo didaye District?
2. What are the main psychological impacts of traditional marriage practices on women?
3. What are the social impacts of traditional marriage practice on women in Wolaita?
4. What are the major causes for conflict in marriage in Wolaita?

### **1.4 Objective of the study**

This study has the following general and specific objectives.

#### **1.4.1 General objective of the study**

This study aims at assessing the psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage in Kindo didaye Woreda, Wolaita.

#### **1.4.2 Specific objectives**

**This study has the following specific objectives in that it will be able to:**

1. Identify the major types of traditional marriage in Wolaita.
2. Assess the psychological impacts of traditional marriage practice on women among the members of the Wolaita ethnic group.
3. Assess the social impact of traditional marriage practice on women in Wolaita.
4. Explore the major causes for conflict in marriage in Wolaita.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

Conducting this study has multiple importance for different target groups. It is significant for

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women who have undergone through traditional marriage and their husbands, women and children affairs, civil society organization operating in the Wolaita zone, counselors and other professionals and the country as a whole. First, for women who have been undergone through traditional marriage can look this study as mirror of their reflection. They can assess based on the questionnaires and reflection on the issues. Secondly, the women and children affair offices will benefit from the study in that it will give due emphasis for the issue and help the women who have been in traditional marriage by taking it as input for their intervention. Thirdly, the Civil Society will also understand the women's problem and their psychosocial needs for provision of better psychosocial therapy. Fourthly, the country will also benefit, when the psychosocial impact of women in traditional marriage have been identified and possible intervention is suggested. The study also serves as a springboard for future in depth research and expansion of the research to other areas.

Finally, the study is significant that it can possibly recommend for actors who are working on women and girls' wellbeing based on its findings.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

The scope of the study is limited to Wolaita Zone particularly Kindo Didya Woreda where traditional marriage is highly prevalent. Although males are also affected by traditional marriage; the impacts of the traditional marriage on women is by far larger and severe than men. Therefore, the scope of the study is limited to women who have been undergone in traditional marriage.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this section, various previous literature related to the study were thoroughly dealt. In this regards, definition of marriage, forms of marriage, causes and consequence of traditional marriage, mate selection, marriage in Ethiopia, psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage, role and status of women and rights and entitlement of women were reviewed.

#### **2.1 Definition of Marriage**

Many anthropologists have struggled to formulate the definition of marriage that would apply to all human society. These anthropological definitions classified into two categories. The definition of marriage has shown light on various criteria that are required to constitute a marriage. The definition of marriage is offered by 19<sup>th</sup> C evolution emphasized that marriage ritually union between man and a woman that is spouse live together have mutually sexual rights. Anthropologists in the first half of present century (Western Mark, 1929:264) offered almost similar definitions of marriage.

They define marriage as a universal institution that involves residential cohabitation, economic cooperation of nuclear family. Marriage is a socially supported union involving two or more individuals in what is regarded as stable enduring arrangement based at least in part on a sexual bond of some kind. Depending on the society, marriage may require religious and or civil sanction although some couples may come to be considered married simply by living together for a period (Common Marriage Law: 21).

It serves several functions. In most societies, it serves to socially identify children by defining kinship ties to a mother, father and extended relatives. It also serves to regulate sexual behavior, to transfer, preserve or consolidate property, prestige and power and most importantly, it is the basis for the institution of family (Raymond Supine and Christopher R. Decorse, 2008).

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### **2.2 Forms of Marriage**

There are two major types of marriage relationship, monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy is the marriage of one male and one female. It is the most common types of marriage. It is in fact the only form Remitted in United States of America polygamy as noted above means many wives or husband. It consists of one man to two or more women. The marriage of one man to two or more woman is called polygamy. Even though many societies permit or encourage polygamous marriages, it does not follow that in societies all or even most married individuals have more than one spouse. In fact in most polygamous societies, monogamy is statically the prevailing form (Schafe, 2003).

According to Bell and Hoijer, (2001) polygamy had been found on a wide scale among the Buganda living in Uganda, East Africa, because of the high mortality rate among Buganda males. There is additional marriage form found in the world, but is very rare. This form is group marriage and is combination of polyandry and polygamy in which sets of woman and man enjoy more or less equal conjugal rights with one another. The morgues arms finishing and agricultural people of Polynesia, have practiced such marriages (Ibid).

### **2.3 Mate Selection**

Different culture accepts different methods for selecting marriage partners. Customs or laws in each society prescribe whom a person may marry. Endogamy is a marriage with in specific group, whether religious, racial class or another type. Exogamy in contrast is marriage outside specific group. Sociologists have also noted that those in second segment of our population marry not within their own social class but in to a neighboring social class. When marriage occur outside of one's social class, hyper gamy (the marriage of females in to higher position appears to be more prevalent in our society than hypogyny (the marriage of female lower social class).

Individuals are also likely to marry within their own ethnic group although this pattern has declined markedly during the past two decades. People also tend to have many partners who are within two to three years of their own age; husbands usually are older than their wives. Even though endogamy is important norms regarding to marriage they are not the only norms an exogamous norm the incest taboo is the widest spread of all norms regarding to marriage.

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Exogamy marriage rules that members of society marry outside their kin group (Schafer, 2003).

Marriage is a social institution that unites people in a special form of mutual dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. As a social practice entered in to through a public act religious or traditional ceremony, it reflect the purposes, characters and customs of the society in which it is found (Path Finder's international, 2006).

According to Kettak (2004:513) marriages is an important means of forming alliance beyond one's own kin group. It transforms relationships and percentage of children. It gives spouses right to each other's sexuality, labor and property. And it establishes a social relationship a final relationships of "affinity" between spouse and each other's relatives.

Endogamy entered to reinforce cohesiveness of the group by suggesting to the young that they should marry someone "of own kind" by contrast exogamy (from Greek exo," outside) requires mate selection outside certain groups usually one's own family or certain kin folk. Many societies have explicit or unstated rules define potential mates as acceptable. The norms can be distinguished in terms of endogamy and exogamy (from the Greek endow klighin) specifies the groups within which a spouse must be found and prohibits with other (Schafer, 2003:356).

### **2.4 Causes and Risk Factors for traditional marriage**

According to Kalkidan (2007), the leading cause of forced/early marriage is gender inequality, whereby girls and women are perceived to be commodities unable to make proper decisions about who and when to marry. Girls and women are forced to become brides because it is easier to control them. In the case of girls, their virginity can be guaranteed and they have longer reproductive periods in which to produce more children.

This culturally-justified patriarchy, while universal in scope, manifests in different practices and beliefs according to local context. This section deals with the most relevant root causes of forced and early marriage, including controlling female behavior and honor, protection of culture, and strengthening family ties. Social forces that have special important impact on child marriage are also detailed in the following section.

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Controlling female behavior and sexuality/“protecting” girls and their “honor” In many societies, frameworks of “honor” underpin notions of sexual morality, the proper and improper behavior of women, and the reputation of men within the larger community. For a man and his family, honor is understood as the sexual integrity and chastity of the women in the family, e.g. mother, wives, sisters, and daughters (Fatehawps and Agries, 2004). This is mainly because honor is seen to reside in the bodies of women, it operates to control, direct, and regulate women’s sexuality and freedom of movement by their male relatives.

### **2.4.1 Protection of “Culture” and Contemporary Pressures**

As seen above, forced marriage is intimately related to cultural norms of marriage, family, and gender. Many scholars explain forced marriage in terms of culture and religion by saying that marriage is a duty according to Islam, that sex outside of marriage is not only sinful but harmful to society, and that single women are particularly dangerous due to their potential to cause social chaos by tempting sexual promiscuity, family ties and family honor. The literature also suggests that family honor is a significant factor motivating forced and early marriage (Peter, 2010, Amsalu, 1993). As described above, a woman’s sexual integrity is a larger aspect of family honor. But a host of other factors can threaten the honor and reputation of a family, which are explored here.

### **2.4.2 Level of Education**

Education is often seen as key to preventing child marriage. forty one in forty two of the countries analyzed by UNICEF, women 20–24 years of age who had attended primary school were less likely to be married by age 18 than those who had not(UNICEF, 2014) . The preventative effect of education was observed most strongly in Senegal, where 20 per cent of women who had attended primary school had been married by the age of 18, compared to 36 per cent of those who had not attended school.<sup>42</sup> Women who attended secondary school were less likely to be married by the age of 18 than those who did not. In the United Republic of Tanzania, for example, women with secondary education were 92 per cent less likely to be married by the age of 18 than women who had attended primary school only. For women who received tertiary levels of education, child marriage rates were often negligible.

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Early Marriage as a Strategy for Economic Survival Poverty is one of the major factors underpinning early marriage. In all the countries analyzed by the UNICEF study, child marriage is most common among the poorest 20 per cent of the population where poverty is acute; a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden on her family. In some cases, her marriage to a much older (and even elderly) man is a family survival strategy and even considered in her best interests. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the bride's family may receive valued goods from the groom or his family as the bride-price for their daughter. In northern Nigeria, the average age of marriage has fallen since 1990. In many places, economic hardship is encouraging a rise in early marriage, even among some population groups that do not normally practice it (Byrne et al 2006, Ene 1990). Thus, low level of education is one of the major affecting factors for the prevalence of Early and forced marriage in sub-Saharan Africa including Ethiopia.

### **2.5 Early Marriage in the International and Regional Contexts**

Studies on early marriage at the international and regional levels have been mostly conducted by international and regional organizations such as UNICEF (2001a), FMRWG (2000, 2001 and 2003), UNESCO (2002a), UNFPA (2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2004b, 2004c), Population Council (2004), Fistula Foundation (2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005a, 2005b), AGI (1997), UN ECA (1999), and IAC (1987 and 1990). Among the reviewed international documents on early marriage, UNICEF's (2001a) and FMRWG's (2003) research reports have extensively examined the prevalence, causes, and consequences of early marriage and proposed the need for further research and action to end the harmful consequences of this practice. Among the reviewed regional research reports on harmful cultural and traditional practices affecting the health of women and girls in Africa, the UN ECA's (1999) research report on "Traditional and Cultural Practices Harmful to the Girl-Child: A Cross- Sectional Review" is relatively related to the present study, though it is broader but less concrete in its scope. Among the reviewed studies related to early marriage at the international and regional levels, UNICEF's (2001a), FMRWG's (2003) and UN ECA's (1999) research reports are briefly reviewed below.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s research report titled "Early Marriage: Child Spouses" (2001a) has examined early marriage, the marriage of children and young

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people under the age of 18, from a human rights perspective. It has also attempted to examine the prevalence, contexts, and causes of early marriage and its impacts on every aspects of the lives of those affected - particularly young girls - and on the whole society based on the available secondary sources on early marriage.

The available data, according to the report, suggest that early marriage is most common in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where poverty, traditional taboos about pre-marital sex and fears of HIV/AIDS are widespread. According to the report, the major reasons for early marriage are: 1) poverty or 'early marriage as a strategy for economic survival'; 2) tradition or the need for protecting girls from pre-marital sex; 3) contemporary pressures such as HIV/AIDS; and 4) lack of legal sanctions against early marriage or lack of effective implementation of existing laws. The report has also underlined reproductive health problems, psychosocial problems, denial of education, violence and abandonment, and poverty as the major harmful consequences of early marriage, particularly for young girls. Finally, the report has concluded with a call for more rights-based research on early marriage, an issue that has far-reaching consequences. Thus, it is suggested that a) the need for small-scale researches on the psychosocial, economic as well as social impacts of early marriage; b) support for the physical well-being of young girls; c) support for the psychological well-being and emergency assistance for young of married girls; d) support for improved economic status; e) education for empowerment and intellectual development; f) increasing self-determination in adolescent girls; g) legal change; and h) advocacy. Overall, the UNICEF (2001a)'s recommendations revolve around the need for helping those who have been married at an early age and the need for preventing early marriage through education, advocacy and alliance-building or networking.

The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (FMRWG)'s research report on "Early Marriage and Poverty: Exploring Links for Policy and Program Development" (2003) has thoroughly examined the links between early marriage and poverty based on the available secondary data on the issue at hand. According to this report, in line with UNICEF (2001a)'s report, early marriage is most prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia because of poverty, illiteracy, custom/ tradition and gender discrimination. It has

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also cited the following as the major consequences of early marriage: 1) violation of the human rights of girls; 2) early pregnancy, unsafe motherhood, and obstetric fistula, which, in turn, result in a) social and physiological vulnerability of married girls, and b) maternal mortality and morbidity; 3) gender violence, which affects the well-being of married girls and the commercialization of sex and marriage; and 4) young married girls vulnerability to HIV/AIDS which, in turn, results in poverty, gender inequality and access to AIDS treatment. Finally, the report has suggested the following frameworks for action: 1) promoting a gender and rights agenda, 2) providing opportunities for services; 3) reforming and/or enforcing laws and policies pertaining to early marriage; 4) supporting girls and developing their skills; and 5) using advocacy as an intervention strategy to prevent early marriage.

The United Nations- African Economic Commission (UN ECA)'s research report on "Traditional and Cultural Practices Harmful to the Girl-Child: A Cross-Sectional Review" (1999) has assessed socio-cultural and economic issues surrounding "harmful traditional practices" affecting the overall well-being of the girl-child based on available secondary sources on the subject. Specifically, section five of the report has examined why girls are married off early, impacts of early marriage on the girl- child in particular and on the society at large, and measures to be taken to address the harmful consequences of the practice in Africa- particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, including Ethiopia. According to the report, there are many interactive social and economic structures and pressures, which encourage a specific marriage, which differ from society to society. The report further notes that, an analysis of the variance of the effect of traditional factors, such as type of production system, lineage organization, inheritance of property (through males or female), political and social stratification, and of one modernization factor, literacy, on the timing of women's marriage (measured by the proportion of single women in the age group 15-19), concluded that literacy is the major modernization factor that produces high proportion of singles. In explaining the reasons why girls are married off early in Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, UN ECA (1999) further argues that:

"If a girl's main role in society is to be a wife and mother, then it may be felt that

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the sooner the better to marry her off and let her achieve recognition in the community in this capacity. Many groups, which practice early marriage, feel strongly that it is essential in order to ensure that girl remains a virgin, and is encouraged by the practice of a bride price being paid to the girl's family. The amounts normally vary according to whether the woman is a virgin, has been married before and has children or not. A woman's value is then based on virginity and fertility. In Gabon, Niger and Togo limits have been set for maximum bride price allowed; however, families of daughters may wish to receive bride- wealth soon so as to have resources to enable their sons to marry. A girl may suffer from reduced self- identity and opportunities for receiving education or learning skills, which could be economically useful and be denied a choice of spouse in order to be protected from being sexually violated, while such restrictive measures are not taken to control males. Cultural norms of parental decision-making power regarding marriage timing and choice of spouse, large families and the expected assistance of the extended family in making the establishment of a household possible, have its major influence on the pattern of early marriage.... Also, lack of change in marriage behavior can be attributed to traditional family systems—mainly based on agriculture, limited agricultural technology, illiteracy and slowly developing economies. With less employment in agricultural work and no alternatives in the modern sector (trade, services, government), women may become more dependent upon their husbands, which eventually could reinforce early marriages. When rural families are struggling to make ends meet, early marriage may be motivated by increasing need for children to provide economic security, which may 'out-balance their reduced need for children as sources of labor'" (Boserup 1985:389, in UN ECA 1999:10-11).

The UN ECA (1999) report has highlighted social and economic structures, poverty, illiteracy, socio-cultural values, and gender discrimination as the major reasons why girls are married off early in Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. It has also pointed out high fertility, reproductive health problems, human rights' violation, effects on educational attainment, and poverty as the major harmful consequences of early marriage. Finally, it has suggested: 1) the need for addressing the negative impacts of early marriage on girls;

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and 2) the need for re-examining legal issues related to: a) marriage and reproductive health, b) land, property and inheritance rights, and then c) addressing legal inequalities.

Of course, various international and regional studies indicate that early marriage, the practice of marriage before 18 years prevails across much of Africa, Asia and Latin America and in some form or another exists throughout the world. According to UNICEF (2001a) exact figures of the number of early marriages are difficult to obtain, as so many are unregistered and unofficial. Of course, there are no accurate data on the prevalence of early marriage at the global level. Although statistics and data are unclear, it is undeniable that there are millions of girls and boys forced into marriage while they are still children (FMRWG 2000). There are, according to child-rights activists, an estimated 50 million early (as early as 7 years old and less) married girls across the world: “Young teen or even pre-teen girls whose innocence is being sacrificed to arranged marriages, often with older men” (Salopek 2004a). Salopek (2004a) further notes that, “Coerced by family and culture into lives of servility and isolation, and scarred by the trauma of too-early pregnancy, child-brides represent a vast, lost generation of children.” While humanitarian campaigns have focused global attention on childhood, AIDS in Africa, FGM and child labor, one of the underlying sources of all these woes remains largely ignored. Child marriage, an entrenched practice long hidden in shadow, was only denounced by the United Nations as a serious human-rights violation in 2001 (Salopek 2004a). Population Council (2004) further argues that, “Early marriage is a neglected human rights abuse that affects millions of girls worldwide”. In short, various studies suggest that early marriage is most common in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where poverty, traditional taboos about pre-marital sex and fears of AIDS are widespread. Accordingly, the following table indicates ten country’s percentage of girls married before age 18.

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Table 1: Child Marriage Top Ten List (DHS 1996-2001)

No.	Country	Percentage of girls
1.	Niger	82
2.	Bangladesh	75
3.	Chad	73
4.	Yemen	64
5.	Mali	63
6.	Nepal	63
7.	Mozambique	59
8	Ethiopia	57
9	India	57
10.	Uganda	50

The above table shows that ‘child’ marriage is most prevalent in Niger (82%) among the top ten lists, followed by countries from South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. In these countries, according to the reviewed studies, parents choose to marry off their daughters early for a number of reasons. Poor families may regard a young girl as an economic burden and her marriage as a necessary survival strategy. They may think that early marriage offers protection for their daughter from the dangers of sexual assault, or more generally, offers the care of a male guardian. Early marriage may also be seen as a strategy to avoid girls becoming pregnant outside marriage. Gender discrimination can also underpin early marriage. Furthermore, girls may be married young to ensure obedience and subservience within their husband’s household and to maximize their childbearing. Of

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course, the causes of early marriage vary from culture to culture. However, the most common causes of early marriage among different cultures are:

1. **Poverty:** early marriage is sometimes viewed as a means of economic survival. If girls are married early, a family has a mouth less to feed, and the hope is that the girl herself will be better off.
2. ***Social unrest or civil strife:*** in countries experiencing war or other types of severe social stresses, violations of children's rights often increase. Child labour, child prostitution, high levels of neglect and abandonment and a rise in early marriage are often signs of underlying social traumas.
3. ***Desire to protect the girl:*** in societies where virginity is valued, early marriage is seen as a way of protecting girls from unsanctioned pre-marital sex.
4. ***Laws:*** in some countries, the age of marriage for boys is higher than for girls. This contributes to the belief that it is acceptable for girls be married at an early age.
5. ***Threats to cultural survival:*** in societies facing war or some other form of trauma or risk, marrying a girl to someone within the same culture is seen as a way of promoting the culture by ensuring that the children will be born and raised in a culturally safe environment.
6. Currently, the Population Council (2004) has developed country-specific briefing sheets on "Child Marriage", including Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia, where marriage at the age of seven or eight is common. According to the Population Council (2004), child marriage has the following consequences: a) it violates fundamental human rights; b) it is closely associated with no or low levels of schooling for girls; c) in many instances, it marks an abrupt transition into sexual relations with a husband who is considerably older and un-chosen; d) it results in early pregnancy which carries special risks for both mother and child; and e) it may put girls at increased risk of HIV infection compared to unmarried sexually active girls.
7. In general, according to the reviewed studies on the consequences of early marriage at the international and regional levels, early marriage has the following multi-dimensional consequences:
8. ***Poor health including poor reproductive health:*** girls who marry young are at risk of

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earlier exposure to risk of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. They also risk diseases such as vesico-vaginal fistula (VVF) or leakages from the bladder into the vagina caused by the birthing process.

9. **High maternal mortality rates:** young women who give birth between 15 and 19 years of age are twice more likely to die in childbirth than women who are over 20 years of age. Early marriage also tends to mean increased pregnancies which further increase the chance of death.
10. **Greater risk of domestic violence:** young girls are often married to men who are much older than themselves. The age difference tends to reinforce the powerlessness of the girl, who is thus at greater risk of abuse and less likely to assert herself.
11. **Lower education and work skills:** girls who marry young tend to drop out of school and are more likely to bear children during adolescence, thus effectively ensuring that they will not return to school or develop other work skills.
12. **Divorce or abandonment:** some desperate girls and women who have been forced into marriage try to run away or take other avenues to leave their spouses, and others are abandoned by their spouses. Usually, however, the girls and women are left with the responsibility of raising children without the husband or family's financial support, thus making them more likely to live in poverty.
13. **Reinforced gender stereotypes and roles:** the lack of other opportunities and the powerlessness that often accompanies early marriage combine to perpetuate the gender roles of girls and women and reinforces cultural traditions that support early marriage as a desirable practice.
14. **Psychological disadvantage:** girls who are forced to marry early often face social isolation and have no one with whom to discuss their unhappy lot.
15. **Widowhood:** where a young girl is married to an older man, the chances of becoming a widow at a young age increase. This often carries with it a low social status and inability to inherit property.
16. **A cycle of poverty and abuse:** children of young and illiterate mothers tend to face the same cycle of deprivation and abuse experienced by their mothers.
17. Overall, early marriage contributes to extreme and persistent poverty; high illiteracy; high incidence of infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS; elevated child

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mortality rates; high birth rates; low life expectancy for women; and malnutrition. In short, there tends to be a relationship between age of marriage, level of education, poverty and health; and early marriage results in a cycle of poverty and poor health.

### **2.6 Marriage in Ethiopia**

Christian marriage mainly in Tigray and Amhara regions, are often arranged by the parents of the bride and groom with a great deal of negotiation. According to tradition and culture, the bride must be virgin when the marriage takes place. Because the bride virginity is highly valued and pride in Christian marriage with whom family being shamed if the bride is not virgin at marriage. Rural women in particular tend to marry at every young age than their husbands. In the past it used to be the custom for the bride groom to be 30 years of age before beginning his public ministry (Solomon, 2003). Christians often wed in orthodox churches and variety of wedding types exists. The bride and groom participate in a special ceremony and agree never to divorce. These types of commitment have become rare in recent years.

Traditionally the grooms parent search for a bride for their son. Before they make any contact with the bride's parent they investigate to make sure that the families are not related by blood. In the past they search back seven generations, but now five generation is acceptable once this has been done, the boy's parent they make contact with prospective bride's parents through a mediator. The mediator goes to the home of the potential bride and asks if their daughter will marry the son of the other parents. The bride's parents often impose conditions and the mediator will take the message to the groom's parents, and then arranges a date for both parents to meet at a mutually convenient location. The proposal usually involves elders who travel from the groom's house to the parents of the bride to ask for the marriage. The elders are traditionally the individuals who decide when and where the ceremony should take place by brewing wine beer and cooking food. A great deals of food is prepared for the occasion, especially dishes (Solomon Kibriye, 2003).

When the parents have reached an agreement the man and women get engaged. The parent then set wedding date and they meet all the wedding expenses. The bride and groom first see each other on their wedding day. Both parents prepare food and drink for the wedding and

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invite guests. The groom goes to the bride house to take his future wife to be. The wedding ceremony starts with dance, music and the bride's parents give the groom a dowry, in most case money and cattle. At the end of the ceremony, the groom takes his bride to his parents' house the groom takes the bride's virginity during the first three days after the marriage. The honeymoon will last between one week to three months depending on the grooms parents' economic circumstances. This takes place at the husband's parent's house. And after the honey moon, the couples return to the house of the bride's parents where they stay together for a set time, again with best man present. During the honey moon, the bride is not allowed to go out during the day; she is only allowed to go out after sun set (Philip Briggs, 2002).

In Muslim marriage, husband can have up to four wives and having large number of children is traditionally considered to be a sign of status among Muslim communities. If the husband of a Muslim woman dies, it is the husband's brother responsibility to look after the wife and the children (Binyam Kebede, 2002). Now days many men and women, often those, who live in urban areas as opposed to rural communities, do not follow this tradition and do not have arranged marriages but it is important to marry someone the family approves.

### **2.7 Role and Status of Women**

Status defined as a position on society according to its rights and obligations (Hagedorn, 1983:88). The position of women in Ethiopia society to the large extent is characterized by traditional values and belief, which find an expression in the social system and religion.

Gender roles are tasks and activities that are assigned to the sexes. The status and role of women in Wolaita is directly linked to the socio-political and economic history of the early Wolaita society (Altaye, 1993:43). The relation between men and women is governed by male superiority and female obedience (Ibid).

### **2.8 Rights and Entitlement of Women**

The convention on the eradication of all forms of discrimination against the women, which was a minded by UN, place an obligation on governments to take steps to endure the elimination of discrimination of human right as whole and convention on the eradication of all

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forms of discrimination against women. The Ethiopian government also shows its commitment to the equitable socio-economic development of women (Tomasevsk, 1993:17).

The Ethiopian women policy, which was announced in 1993 amended at institutionalizing the social, economic and political rights of women by creating appropriate structures in a government office and institutions to ensure gender sensitive intervention to change the unequal position of a women in the country (WAO, 1998).

Following the women policy, the constitution exhaustively demonstrated that women are provided with legal protection for the social, economic and political right. It is also prohibits any discrimination on ground of gender. Universal declaration of human right (1948:45), everyone is entitled to all the right and freedom without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex... women's convention (Ibid).

In 1974 the revolutionary Ethiopian women's Association (REWA) established by proclamation, but this organization was too monolithic and too close to the Derg to have any real use to women. The purpose of its establishment was, in fact the consolidation of the Derg's power, promoting the interest of women was in fact the interests of women was not high on its agenda nor was it designed to influence government policies for women benefit from development programs. As a result there was little improvement in the lives of Ethiopian women whether in the social, economic and political sphere especially of those who lived in the rural area. Although a few development agencies particularly NGOs engaged in relief and rehabilitation work, had attempted to incorporate women's issues into their work programs, they did not show the expected results, this was because previous government had not given women's development the priority it deserved and therefore had not created a conducive atmosphere for development initiatives for women.

Soon after the down fall of the Dergue regime, the various political and national organs setting aside their differences, formed a Transitional Government whose principles were set out in a charter in which peace was the main principle of governance both the transitional Government and the first selected Government in 1995 comparatively has given priority to the speeding up of equality between men and women.

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Until recently governments in Ethiopia have not had any policy on women's affairs, hence they have not been as important potential beneficiaries of government development programs. Although women have made substantial contributions to the struggle Ethiopian people have waged to ensure their right and freedoms, their struggle up to now has not been sufficiently institutionalized (Fatehawps and Agrees, 2004).

Women's demand to participate actively in national development and to exercise their right to enjoy its fruits is now relatively receiving support in government and local communities. The right to free and full consent to a marriage is recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of human right (UDHR). Article 16 of UDHR' state "marriage shall be entered in to only with the free and full consent of the intending parties'. Articles 16;1 of the 1979 convention of the elimination of All forms of violence Against women (CEDAW) prescribes equally for men and women and a) the same right to enter into marriage b)the same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with the free and full consent".

### **2.9 Early Marriage in Ethiopian context**

Early marriage can be found throughout Ethiopia. Regarding the trend of early marriage in Ethiopia, the National Family and Fertility Survey (NFFS 1990, in EWLA et al 2002) found that the average age at marriage was 15.6 years for the country as a whole and 16.2 for Addis Ababa (CSA 1993, in EWLA et al 2002:4). According to the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS 2000, in Population Council 2004), 19% of the girls were married by age 15 and about half of girls were married by age 18 at the national level. "Overall urban women ages 20-24 marry about 2.5 years later than rural women. The median age at first marriage among women ages 25-49 varies significantly by region ranging from 14.3 years in Amhara to 19.4 years in Dire Dawa" (DHS 2000, in Morin and Garbus 2003:47-49). DHS (2000) also found a strong relationship between education and age of marriage. Finally, the survey found that men marry more than seven years later than women in Ethiopia (CSA and ORC MACRO 2000: 77, in EWLA et al 2002:5).

According to the National Committee on Traditional Practices in Ethiopia (NCTPE 1997), the prevalence rate of early marriage at the national level is 54%. However, early marriage is practiced to a larger degree in Amhara (82%), Tigray (79%), Benishangul/Gumuz and

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Gambella (64%). The survey report also notes that over 50% of girls were married under age 15 in Amhara (62%), Tigray (53%), Addis Ababa (51%) and Benishangul/Gumuz (50%). Early marriage, according to NCTPE (1997:108), seems higher among the Orthodox Christians.

NCTPE (1997)'s national baseline survey results indicate the highest prevalence rate of early marriage in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia, where 82% the female population have married before 18 years of age. In this region, according to NCTPE (1997), at least four out of every five women were married young and in several other regions, nearly two thirds of women wed early. However, the average age at first marriage in Ethiopia may mask the fact that early marriage may still prevail in some districts within the country or the region, where marriage agreements take place for girls as young as 4 to 5 years old and sometimes before birth (UNICEF 2002d). UNICEF (2002d) further notes that though some girls marry and leave home soon after the agreement, most go to their husband's home when they are 10 to 13 years old. Presently, although the socio-culturally accepted age of marriage varies from region to region, early marriage (marriage before 18 years of age) is still prevalent in the rural areas of Ethiopia (Adane Gossa 1990; Haile-Gabriel Dagne 1994a and 1994b; Heinonen 1996, in Heinonen 2002). Though there are no accurate data on the prevalence as well as the current trend of early marriage in Ethiopia, the available sources suggest that the practice is evident throughout Ethiopia and it is most common in the Amhara region.

“The extreme form of early of marriage is still highly prevalent in the Amhara Region although it has a significant prevalence rate in Oromiya as well. Relatively speaking, early marriage is not widely practiced in the Southern Region but the high incidence of abduction appears to have triggered early marriage in some districts. However, there are variations among the large number of ethnic groups in the Region. For example, in Sidama Zone, most girls marry at around 14”.

In general, in all regions of Ethiopia, most girls marry before they reach puberty compared to their male counterparts. Especially, among the Amhara, early marriage arrangements take place even before the birth of a girl-child. The World Health Organization's (WHO 1993, in EWLA et al 2002) team encountered an example of the “the

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extreme nature of some early marriages” in one *woreda* clinic in Amhara Region. During discussions with maternal care and health (MCH) clients, a young mother informed the team that, “The year old-baby that she was breast-feeding was ‘already engaged to be married’” (WHO 1999: 23, in EWLA et al 2002:5). In short, the occurrence of early marriage in Ethiopia is so common that a hospital has been set-up to deal only with ‘obstetric fistula’, a consequence of early sexual relationships and childbirth (FMRWG 2000). According to the founder of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital (AAFH), Dr. Catherine Hamlin, 33% of young women suffering from ‘fistula’ came from the Amhara Region (WIC 2005b). This indicates the highest prevalence rate of early pregnancy complications as a result of early marriage practices in this region.

### **2.10 Types and Patterns of Early Marriage Arrangements in Ethiopia**

Early marriage, marriage before or during adolescence, has different forms of arrangements in the Ethiopian context. UN ECA (1999) has identified six types of marriage arrangements in the regions of Ethiopia where the practice of early marriage is prevalent. These are:

1. *Promissory marriage* whereby a family promises its new-born (or not yet born), daughter to another family which formally proposes marriage;
2. *Child marriage* whereby children under the age of ten are wedded in one of two ways. In one case, the child-bride is given to her in-laws immediately after the wedding ceremony. In the other case, the girl stays with her parents until such time as the two families agree that she is mature enough to go to live with her husband. In the first case, sexual assault is likely and the chances of the marriage breaking down are also greater;
3. Early adolescent marriage which takes place between the ages of 10 and 15;
4. Marriage of a young girl to an elderly man where the man is typically between the ages of 40 and 50, but can be even over 60. The main reason given for supporting this practice is fertility considerations, followed by the perceived better adaptability of young girls to married life, need for labor of a young girl and submissive wife to provide care in the husband’s old age, desirability of a virgin and increased wealth;

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5. Late adolescent marriage which takes place between the ages of 16 and 20; and
6. Adult marriage, which takes above the age of 21.

In each of the above-mentioned types of marriage, according to UN ECA (1999), a marriage is arranged after negotiations between two families. The bride, who has no idea who her husband would be, is required to prove she is a virgin. If she is not a virgin, she and her family are disgraced and the marriage is dissolved (UN ECA 1999).

The girl reaches puberty, at which time normally, the husband may begin having sexual relations with the young wife. In one area of Ethiopia surveyed, 21 of respondents said that the ideal age for marriage of a girl was below the age of nine, with the majority of respondents in areas surveyed replying that ages 10-15 were more preferred. In a few areas, girls marry at 14 or 15. The same research showed that people generally give their children in marriage at an early age due to the pressure to conform to tradition. Other major reasons were to ensure the girl remained a virgin until marriage and to see their children married before getting old or dying. The parents of a child married early often also feel proud and respected because their child was wanted at an early age” (UN ECA 1999:1112).

Here it should be noted that early marriage arrangement patterns in Ethiopia change in accordance with the changing historical, political and socio-economic conditions. In this regard, Alemante Amara, in his M.A. thesis in Social Anthropology, titled “Early Marriage and Reproductive Health Problems in Eastern Gojjam”(2004), has pointed out four phases of early marriage arrangement patterns in Ethiopia. The first phase was the arrangements of marriage for political alliance through “dynastic inter-marriage” and this was occurred before 1941. The second phase was the period from 1941-1975 and during these times early marriage arrangements were based on economic motives, mainly land. The third phase was during the mid 1980s, when early marriage arrangements were mainly based on economic and life securities. The last phase is from late 1980s towards the present and during this phase early marriage arrangement patterns take cultural and religious cover or socio-cultural justifications such as fear of *qomo qär* (unmarriageable) or *sal mot*

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*abäbayän l y* (parents' desire to see the marriage of their daughter before they pass away). He has also found that presently the age at first marriage is going down from 12 to 9 years with specific reference to one peasant community in East Gojjam Administrative Zone of the Amhara Region of Ethiopia.

### 2.11 Causes of Early Marriage in the Ethiopian Context

In the Ethiopian context, early marriage is practiced for various reasons. The reviewed studies have repeatedly asserted that the prevalence of early marriage in Ethiopia is closely related to *underdevelopment, poverty*, and the 'low' *status of women*. In other words, the explanations given for early marriage in Ethiopia revolve around economic and socio-cultural factors.

According to the NCTPE (1997:108-110), the major reasons for the practice of early marriage among the different ethnic and religious groups of Ethiopia are:

*Economic reasons*, i.e. improvement of the economic status of the family through marriage, or through material gains during the marriage ceremony (in Amhara in particular where different contributions in kind or cash are made for the ceremony by relatives, neighbors, etc) or through dowry or bride price (Anyiwak, Bume, Guragie, Harari);

- Parents' desire to see the marriage of their daughter and/or a grand-child before they pass away;
- To strengthen ties between the marrying families;
- To avoid the perpetuation of a non-married status (*qomo qär*, unmarriageable). If a girl is not married beyond a certain age, she is considered as undesirable for marriage, a shame to both her family and herself. To avoid this *qomo qär*-stigma and ensure the girl gets a husband, families agree to a request even when they might not consider the girl old enough;

To avoid pre-marital sex or loss of virginity and its consequences; and

- Others include the need to marry before menstruation appears (Argoba), to stake first-claim (Tigraway), for the fame of giving a marriage feast (Amhara, Kimant), as a repayment for attending others' (friends, relatives,

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neighbors) wedding feasts (Amhara), to get the services of a son-in-law (Agew) and fear of abduction (Oromo).

In short, according to NCTPE (1997:110-111), parents and/or grand-parents arrange early marriage for their daughters and/or grand-daughters for economic and socio-cultural reasons such as improvement of the economic status of the family through marriage, to strengthen family-ties, desire to have a child (grand-child) or see the marriage of their daughters, to avoid *qomo qär*-stigma, and to protect girls from pre-marital sex (loss of virginity).

According to UNICEF (2004c), the primary reasons for early marriage in Ethiopia are: 1) for the fame of giving a marriage feast as a demonstration of wealth and respect; 2) to secure economic alliance and consolidate their wealth, parents of boys from well-to-do and respected families seek partners for their sons from similar class backgrounds and arrange for their marriage at an early age- in many cases husbands are much older than their girl-brides; and 3) to ensure that girls are virgins when they marry thereby preserving their own as well as their families' respect. These explanations for the persistence of early marriage in Ethiopia reveal "the economics of early marriage" and its socio-cultural justifications. In most studies, the *economic motives* behind why girls are married off early among the agrarian communities of Ethiopia are covered with socio-cultural justifications. In this connection, Mulu Muleta and Willams (1999:2051) state that:

"In agrarian societies, such as Ethiopia, the social and cultural pressures on girls to marry at an early age remain very strong. In such societies, an unmarried daughter passed a certain age may be considered an embarrassment or disgrace to the family as well as an economic burden, if she is economically unproductive. In this case, parents are no more likely to spread their child-related investment over many children because of the high risk associated with investing a large amount in any one child. A situation like this could lead parents to invest less in educating their daughters. In the traditional settings of Ethiopia, the girl-child is a victim of early arranged marriage which is customarily the only vocation in her life, where she is excluded from the decision-making process in regard to her spouse, and reproductive health. In traditional societies such as those in Ethiopia, marriages are

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usually arranged by parents or elders, who decide at which age and whom the girl will marry. Decisions are usually based on financial interests, with the girl's opinion rarely considered. Girls are given in marriage at an early age because of pressure to conform to tradition and to ensure that the girl is a virgin on marriage. Parents also wish to see their children married and settled before they themselves become old or die. Age differences between husbands and wives are frequent, with men usually aged between 18 and 20 years on marriage, by contrast with girls who may be married from the age of 6 years.”

Three major factors that are still critical to understanding the persistence of child marriages among the rural communities of Ethiopia are:

- A high social and cultural value attached to virginity;
- The need for creating a bond between families rather than a personal arrangement by bride and groom; and
- A growing trend towards a reduction of ritual and expenditure for all marriages, combined with a shift toward informality (Helen Pankhurst 1992, in Ewla et al 2002).

These studies found out that daughters are hardly ever inherit anything from parents and that most brides bring no asset to marriage. It might be that the responses to increased impoverishment are area-specific in that while it might mean delayed marriages in some areas, in other communities, it might result in the persistence of early marriage (EWLA et al 2002:6-7). EWLA et al further notes that:

“The justifications for early marriage are once again very similar in the Amhara and Tigray regions of Ethiopia and can be summed as fear of being dishonored by the parents of the girl as a result of delayed marriage and/or loss of virginity, to prevent abduction, to secure a proper marriage for daughters and to forge links between families. In Amhara Region, close relatives, neighbors and friends make contributions to the wedding ceremony. This, in turn, has led to a type of rotating credit system where those who contribute promote early marriage of their own daughters so as to ensure repayment of their contribution to other marriages”

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(EWLA et al 2002:22).

Diverse explanation have been given for the persistence of early and child marriages in Ethiopia. Of these, the most prominent and plausible are those that are related to parent's desire to ensure a daughter's virginity as well as secure a future of a child (EWLA et al 2002:6). In the past, the rationale for these types of 'parent-centered' child or early marriages were said to be the forging of alliances among the rich peasant classes for purposes of consolidating ancestral land-holdings (Haile- Gabriel Dagne 1994b). In some regions of Ethiopia, including some parts of Amhara Region, child marriages still persist. In this region, men are desperate to find a wife because only then are they allowed to own land. If so, the reason for its tenacity almost thirty years after the land reform makes it imperative to search for more complex explanatory frameworks (EWLA et al 2002).

In general, the reasons why girls in Ethiopia, like in other traditional societies, are married off early are diverse and complex. According to the reviewed studies, there are various interactive socio- cultural and economic structures and pressures, which encourage early marriage among the rural communities of Ethiopia. The most common explanations for the persistence of early marriage range from the desire to ensure a daughter's virginity; to secure a child's future at an early age; or simply to conform to tradition.

### **2.12 Consequences of Early Marriage in the Ethiopian Context**

Whatever justifications or explanations are given for early marriage, many scholars and health professionals believe that the consequences of early marriage are largely negative, particularly for young women. In this regard, WHO (1999, in UN ECA 1999) argues that:

“By remaining in subservient roles, whether as daughters within the parental household or as early brides, opportunities to develop the psychological and social skills necessary to make decisions and life choices remain severely restricted. These restrictions are compounded further by the fact that young women are denied educational opportunities, even at the primary level”.

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When we come to Ethiopia, many studies on the consequences of early marriage have been primarily concerned with the health risks of the practice. According to the baseline survey results of the National Committee on Traditional Practices in Ethiopia (NCTPE 1997), the most frequently mentioned harmful effects of early marriage are: 1) problems related to early pregnancy and Childbirth; 2) harm to the uterus and/or the body in general including the lack of thrive, sickliness of the girl-child and damage to the uterus and the vagina sometimes leading to death; 3) psychological problems; 4) loveless marriage often ending in divorce or separation; 5) the girl-child being not mature enough to run a household; and 6) high expenses related to the marriage, since it often ends in early divorce or the running away of the bride.

According to the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS 2000, in EWLA et al 2002:22), “early age at childbearing has a detrimental effect on the health of both mother and child.”

The survey enumerates relatively higher level of pregnancy complications among young mothers, due to physiological immaturity, inexperience with childcare practices that also influence maternal and infant health as some of the major consequences of early childbearing. The most widely documented consequence of early childbearing is obstructed labor, leading to vesico-vaginal fistula (Nebiat Tafari 1987, in EWLA betal 2002:22).

Alemante Amara, in “Early Marriage and Reproductive Health Problems in Eastern Gojjam” (M.A. Thesis, 2004), identifies the following consequences of early marriage with specific reference to one peasant community in East Gojjam: 1) Rapture uterus or obstructed labor; 2) fistula which occurs in two ways: first due to in-balance sexual-intercourse when the husband is too much older than the young wife; and second due to prolonged labor of young pregnant woman; 3) spontaneous abortion or miscarriages; 4) changing of spouse or frequent divorce which results in conflict over private children and share of property; 5) violence against women and denial of the fundamental rights of girls such as the right to education; and 6) exposure to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. In line with the sixth point, Bruce and Clark note that:

“In Ethiopia, when the HIV epidemic is selective of young females, child marriage

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may be a significant risk factor for adolescent girls. Among young people aged 15-24, girls are more likely than boys to be infected with HIV. In Amhara region, two of the four sentinel sites report the highest rates of HIV among pregnant women in the entire country. This region also has the lowest average age of marriage in Ethiopia” (Bruce and Clark 2003, in Population Council 2004:2).

In an article on “Ethiopian: Fistula Makes Social Outcasts of Child Brides” (2004a), Inbaraj has written a life story of a fistula victim young-bride in the Amhara Region and how this incidence makes victims social outcasts, with specific reference to a young bride who got married at 12 and got pregnant at 13. In another article on “Married as Children, Women with Obstetric Fistulas Have No Future” (2004b), Inbaraj has also written the life history of a fistula victim child-bride from the same Amhara region. Furthermore, the health consequences of early pregnancy and life stories of fistula patients who have got access to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital are well-documented and publicized by the Fistula Foundation in its own website on “One Woman’s Story” (see Fistula Foundation 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005a and 2005b).

The only Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia in Addis Ababa operates on 1200 fistula patients a year. However, these are just the girls who manage to get to the hospital, representing only a small proportion of the girls affected throughout Ethiopia. The other may remain unaware that an operation can help them (FMRWG 2000). In Ethiopia, the terrain of mountains and gorges makes transport difficult and transport costs may be prohibitive (Mulu Muleta and Willams 1999). World Vision (2002:1-2) further notes that, “Although the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital charges nothing, most women from rural areas have difficulty getting there for treatment. Some are pushed in wheelbarrow for carried across rugged, rural terrain. Others ride camels or donkeys. Some, unable to read, arrive with signs asking people to guide them to the hospital.”

In the Ethiopian socio-cultural and economic context, reasons for fistula victim girls’ delay or not reporting their injuries are multi-factorial which include poverty, complete dependence on the husband and his family, lack of health facilities, and the cultural taboo

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of discussing issues relating to sexual intercourse and childbirth. Traditional beliefs may mean that a woman is regarded as a failure if she does not achieve a normal delivery at home. Bringing about changes in attitudes and behavior within traditional societies is a very slow process. This process would include education, especially of girls, which need to be supported by influential leaders. Governments and health workers need to be aware of the severity of the problem. Policies and laws should be revised and strategies designed to both create and enforce laws about the rights of women (Kelly and Kwast 1993; Mulu Muleta and Williams 1999). With regard to the socio-cultural dimensions of reproductive health problems and the need for community-based interventions, the World Health Organization notes that:

“Of all the health challenges that countries face, those posed in relation to sexual and reproductive health are perhaps the most daunting because they involve not only diseases, but also normal components of life such as sexual maturation and pregnancy, surrounded by cultural, social, ethical and religious considerations. In no other aspect of health is the need for broad community involvement, alongside focused and effective interventions, so necessary” (WHO 1997, in WHO1999:).

According to the available data on fistula victims in Ethiopia, most fistula patients are the victims of the custom of early marriage. In Ethiopia, like in many developing countries, the role of women is limited to “providing sexual satisfaction for their husbands, producing children and performing the hard labor associated with agrarian life. Fistula injuries destroy their ability to fulfill these roles, and with it their sense of self-worth. They became social outcasts from their community through no fault of their own” (Hamlin, in Inbaraj 2004a). There are many empirical evidences of very young brides from the Amhara region of Ethiopia suffering from reproductive health problems related to early pregnancy and early childbearing (Inbaraj 2004a and 2004b, see also WIC 2005b).

Early marriage poses many dangers to the girl’s health, fertility, physical and psychological well- being and/or her rights to an education and other life choices. In other words, early marriage closes girls’ educational prospects and threatens their health. The health risks are

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numerous and contribute to the high rates of maternal and child morbidity and mortality. The health risks from early childbearing are exacerbated by poverty and lack of information and services. These include malnutrition and low antenatal and postnatal care. Poor health and lack of childcare skills of child mothers result in the intergenerational transmission of morbidity and mortality (NTPE 1997; FMRWG 2000; Belete and Dereje 2000; Heinonen 2002). Researchers found that girls who marry young are more likely to be illiterate and to have no experience of formal education. In other words, early-childhood marriage has negative consequences on educational opportunities, the physical and psychological health of the child bride and on family stability, especially the high rate of divorce, desertion and poor employment prospects for the young girl.

With regard to the psychological, social and political consequences of early marriage, EWLA et al (2002:22-23) note that:

“Early and child marriage restricts opportunities to develop the psychological and social skills necessary to make strategic decisions and life choices. The political outcome of child marriage is thus lack of equal citizenship resulting from inhibiting the right of consent and autonomy. Early and child marriage is clearly one of the major obstacles to the successful implementation of a number of development policies of the country such as the Women’s Policy, education, health, and population policies as well as policy to reduce poverty. The disempowerment of women resulting from lack of schooling, ability to earn a decent income and inability to make strategic decision results in marital instability, psychological trauma and limited alternatives which often end in poor employment and even exposure to HIV/AIDS are the overall consequences of early and forced marriages” (EWLA et al 2002:22 – 23).

Overall, the reviewed studies on the consequence of early marriage in Ethiopia have focused on the health risks of early marriage. In this connection, EWLA et al (2002:7) argue that:

“In terms of consequences of early marriage, the health consequences of early marriage have attracted relatively more attention. Passing references have also been made to the

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restrictions of opportunities to develop the psychological and social skills necessary to make decisions and life choices, denial of educational opportunities that result from early marriage. However, in Ethiopia, there has been very little discussion of the political and social consequences of child and early marriage. In part, this is most likely due to the emerging character of the women's movement in the country and the tendency of NGOs working on gender issues to shy away from political issues. A noteworthy effort at shifting towards rights-based advocacy has been initiated by the Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association. Basing their arguments on the new Ethiopian Constitution and its commitment to international human rights instruments, the organization is calling on the government to take all the necessary measures to abolish practices such as FGM and early marriage. There is, however, much more work that needs to be done in order to understand the various social and political consequences of these practices.”

Some studies, mostly conducted by UNICEF, on early marriage in Ethiopia generally highlight the negative effects of early marriage on girls' education, which is the basis for their human and social development. According to the Population Council (2004), married girls receive little or no schooling. According to DHS (2000, in Population Council 2004), 80% of married girls have received no education, and 81% cannot read at all; and only 3% of married girls aged 15-19 are in school, compared to 34% of unmarried girls. The Population Council (2004) also notes that large spousal age differences may limit married girls' autonomy and decision-making ability.

Early marriage is illegal in Ethiopia. At the national and regional levels, the new Ethiopian family law legislates against early marriage, marriage before the age of 18 for both boys and girls. Despite the illegality of early marriage in Ethiopia, it is widely practiced in the rural settings of Ethiopia, especially parents in rural settings of the Amhara Region, marry their daughters off at a very young age (as young as 2 years old or below) due to socio-cultural and economic reasons which are repeatedly cited in the reviewed studies.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, health problems (in most cases), psychosocial impacts and lack of educational opportunities for girls are just some of the multi- dimensional

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issues discussed in the reviewed studies on early marriage in Ethiopia.

In general, the reviewed studies on marriage arrangements and early marriage practices in Ethiopia give one with the general customs and traditions related to marriage practices in general and early marriage in particular. However, there is no any single study conducted on “early marriage and its effects on girls’ education” with specific reference to the present study area, Mecha *Woreda* in West Gojjam, Northwestern Ethiopia. In this regard, one of the purposes of this study is to fill such a research gap.

### **2.13 The Social Conceptions of “Girl-hood” and the Feminist Critique**

At the international level, CRC (1989) defines the “child” as “anyone below the age of 18.” However, in traditional societies, including Ethiopia, “childhood” for girls is socially defined. In this connection, UN ECA (1999) notes: “One must bear in mind the fact that many girls are married and are mothers by middle adolescence and are burdened with adult responsibilities.” Girls are typically expected to take on a major part of caring for younger siblings and household chores even before adolescence. By that time, patterns of limited opportunity and cultural expectations have shaped the life-time potential for the vast majority of girls. UN ECA (1996, in UN ECA 1999) further argues that:

“Girls in Africa live in environments, societies and cultures that are diverse. Yet their disadvantaged situation is basically similar wherever they might live. They are more likely to be born into discrimination, be under valued in comparison to their brothers, be exploited and considered transitory members of their families, and serve as helpers to their over burdened mothers from a very early age. Their sexuality increases their vulnerability to violence and abuse. These discriminatory attitudes and practices, deeply rooted in the cultures and traditions of some African societies, are perpetuated and accepted primarily because societies are basically complacent and satisfied with the status quo” (UN ECA 1999:2).

The girl-child in traditional societies of Africa has been described as being discriminated against throughout her life from birth onward. From an early age, girls are socialized to put

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themselves last (UN ECA 1999). According to UN ECA (1999), everything that happens in girl's childhood has a cumulative effect, which culminates in adult women being hindered, discriminated against or otherwise being put in a disadvantage position, having fewer rights and opportunities as compared with men.

“For many girls, adulthood is entered into with poor health as a consequence of years of poor nutritional status, adolescent childbearing and heavy workload. This lack of reserve energy and spare time makes real participation in the development of her community and self-development through education and training impossible even if the opportunity is available. ... ‘The girl-child of today is the woman of tomorrow. In order that she may grow up with the health, confidence and education necessary for her to take her place with dignity and equal to man in society, special attention needs to be focused on her’” (UN ECA 1999:12).

In Africa, many of the cultural and traditional practices stem from “the belief that females are inferior, do not benefit the family into which they are born, and must be controlled as well as prepared for their main role -- and generally only means of earning respect and status in life -- to be wives and mothers” (UN ECA 1999:2-3).

The feminist critique of 1950s ‘girlhood project’ was rooted in rebellion against the “traditional conception” of “girl-hood” (Sommers and Whitehead 1998). According to feminist critics, earlier generations of girls were raised primarily to be wives and mothers, from puberty on, parents taught daughters to be modest, nice, nurturing, accomplished in the domestic arts, and virginal. Since a young woman's virginity was understood as a moral as well as a physical condition, family and church conspired to keep women “pure.” The feminist activists who undertook the ‘girlhood project’ declared war on what they viewed as “Victorian double standards for boys and girls,” which they blamed for unhappy marriages and unfulfilled female desires. They instead called for a new single sexual standard based on “traditional boyhood.” In their play and pursuits, little girls were to be elites; a “traditionally feminine daughter” became a mild social embarrassment, while a “feisty torn- boy/daughter” was a source of pride. In everything from sports to sex, girls gained experiences that were once off-limits. The virtue of staying sexually “pure” has

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been replaced by the virtue of being physically fit. Amidst its success at terminating different standards for the sexes, the ‘girlhood project’ has created new discontents (Sommers and Whitehead 1998). Based on the available evidence on the negative consequences of the feminist activists’ ‘girlhood project’ on the ‘girls of gen x’, Sommers and Whitehead further note that:

“...All that is naturally womanly - especially anything related to childbearing, is treated by elites as something to be managed, minimized and somehow overcome. As a result, a woman’s life between ages 10 and 60 has been medicalised and problematized with a host of products and technologies like birth control and abortion, hormone replacement therapy, and cosmetic surgery being offered to ward off or manage what is natural. Old women must recognize that their feminist critique of 1950s girl- hood, which inspired the effort to remake female upbringing may not fit the realities of girls’ lives now. May be the problem then is the ‘tyranny of the femininity mystique.’ But the solution today is not a more ‘unnatural’ and therefore even ‘more tyrannical masculine mystique’” (Sommers and Whitehead 1998:1-2).

Taking into account issues surrounding both the traditional conception of “girl-hood” and that of the feminist critique of 1950s ‘girlhood project’, let us proceed to the link between the notion of “girl-hood” and early marriage in the Ethiopian context.

In the traditional settings of Ethiopia, the social conception of “a girl is no longer a child” (*yäset l t n š yälläwum*) is significant for the continued social acceptance of early marriage. In this context, the Ethiopian legislations provide background information about the basic principles underlining the “social construction of the Ethiopian girl-child.” According to the *Fäta Nägäst* (The Law of Kings), a fifteenth century text that contains legal provisions on matters regarding social life in Ethiopia, “girls reach majority between ages twelve to fifteen years, but boys when they are eighteen or when they are able to financially support themselves and/or their families.” Furthermore, Article 581 of the Ethiopian Civil Code (1960) sets “fifteen years as the legal age of marriage for girls and eighteen years for boys.” However, the expression “girl-child” as used in the International

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Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989) and that of the revised family law of Ethiopia (2000) refers to “girls” up to age 18 and therefore they are normally considered minors without the rights that an adult, male or female, would be expected to have. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the notion of “girl-hood” or “girl-child” refers to “girls” up to age 18.

### **2.14 Early marriage**

The reviewed studies on “early marriage” reveal the lack of a universally accepted definition for “age of marriage.” In other words, one of the difficulties revolving around the understanding of “early marriage” is with regard to its definition. The concept is not as simple and straight forward as it may appear. Attempts to define it have taken two questions as central issues, i.e. what constitutes ‘marriage’? And what constitutes ‘early marriage’? In this connection, UNICEF, in its publication on “Early Marriage: Child Spouses” (2001a), notes that:

“Birth, marriage and death are the standard of key events in most people’s lives. But only one— marriage—is a matter of choice. The right to exercise that choice was recognized as a principle of law even in Roman times and has long been established in international human rights instruments. Yet many girls, and a smaller number of boys, enter marriage without any chance of exercising their right to choose. Some are forced into marriage at a very early age. Others are simply too young to make an informed decision about their marriage partner or about the implications of marriage itself. They may have given what passes for ‘consent’ in the eyes of custom or the law, but in reality, consent to their binding union has been made by others on their behalf. The assumption is that once a girl is married she has become a woman—even if she is only 12. Equally, where a boy is made to marry, he is now a man and must put away childish things. While the age of marriage is generally on the rise, marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18 is still widely practiced” (UNICEF 2001a:2).

The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (FMRWG 2003:39) defines marriage existing in all societies as a “formalized relationship with legal/or social

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standing between individual men and women, in which sexual relations are legitimized and as an area for reproduction and child rearing which has state recognition.” Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (FMRWG 2001:1) further argues that:

“Marriage is usually greeted as a joyful occasion. It displays the union of two families and the creation of a new domestic unit to continue the hopes and values of the community. In reality, however, for girl children, the event often represents a serious abuse of human rights. From birth, they are treated less favorably than their brothers. Girls are worked harder, receive less education than boys. If girls do attend school, they complete fewer grades than boys. Marriage, relentless hard work and childbearing are an almost inevitable premature end to a girl’s childhood and formal education. Early marriage consumes many years of a girl’s adolescence, compromising her schooling, life choices and future health (Aleksander 1998). In these situations, girls are often condemned to lives of misery, servitude, sexual abuse and premature childbirth while they are still children themselves and therefore, before they have even reached the internationally agreed age of consent. The child may be classified as a ‘wife’ but is often little more than a ‘slave’ whose body is used for sexual purposes as well as household drudgery.”

With specific reference to what constitutes “early marriage”, international organizations defined the concept as follows:

- According to UNICEF (2001a:5), “early marriage refers to the practice of marriage before or during adolescence.”
- According Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (2003), early marriage refers to any form of marriage that takes place before a child has reached 18 years.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979) states that, “any betrothal or marriage of a child should not have any legal status.” Article 16 (2) of CEDAW further states that, “the minimum age for marriage for both male and female should be 18 years, the age when they

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have attained full maturity and capacity to act.” However, most early marriages are arranged and based on the consent of parents and often fail to ensure the best interest of the girl-child. Early marriages often include some element of force. A forced marriage is defined as any “marriage conducted without the full consent of both parties and where duress is a factor” (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2000, in Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls 2003: 8).

- In its preamble, the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (ratified in 1964) recalls article 16 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which specifically refers to: “Men and women of full age” and states that “marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.” Article 3 of the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages requires that States register all marriages in an official register. However precise statistics on early marriage are difficult to obtain, as, still, few marriages are formally registered.

The global understanding of marriage ability is expressed in terms of the legal age for marriage. However, this is neither universally adhered to custom nor a commonly accepted view. Hence, in spite of provisions of UN human rights instrument, the promulgation of statutory rules for early marriage by member countries have so far proven very ineffective. Most customary laws do not recognize women’s equal right in marriage, in property or inheritance rights, thus denying them their right as children and as adults. They also limit women and girls ability to exercise their right via statutory laws by overcoming their efficacy due to the need to ‘preserve, adhere, and/or respect culture and traditions.’ Custom, tradition, and culture are thus used to oppose change or promote the continuation of early marriage (Heinonen 2002).

The age of child brides varies according to countries. Furthermore, the age gap between the man and his wife varies, but the man often is much older. In other words, various international conventions and provisions that deal with “age of marriage” do not clearly state “when a girl is too young to marry.” Accordingly, there is no commonly accepted

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definition to “early marriage.” The lack of an overarching definition of “early marriage” in international conventions has generated some debate. Some scholars and activists argue that instead of looking for a universal age at which girls (and boys) should not marry, we should instead focus on eliminating the unwanted effects of early marriage. In this connection, some commentators suggest that a universal age of marriage is not appropriate, in part because societies have a different understanding of what it means to be a child as well as different socio-economic and cultural realities. In this context, Bunting (1999) proposes that governments should be allowed to set the age of marriage below 18 years of age, but this lower age does not result in any discrimination or adverse consequences for women. She also argues that this approach to “early marriage” provides a more accurate reading of the international conventions than the approach, which stipulates 18 as the minimum age of marriage. In other words, though the international conventions and declarations are aimed at protecting girls from the harmful consequences of early marriage, in developing countries, including Ethiopia, girls are married early mainly for socio-cultural and economic reasons, as we have explored earlier in the socio-cultural and economic frameworks of early marriage.

According to (EWLA et al 2002:22), the working definition of ‘early marriage’ is taken as marriage before or during adolescence. In this study, the concept of “early marriage” refers to a situation where “children under the age of 18 enter into marriage.” This definition is in line with the current family law of Ethiopia, which legislates against “marriage before the age of 18 for both boys and girls”, or “early marriage.”

### **2.15 Impacts and Consequences of Traditional Marriage**

The impact of forced and early marriage on girls and society at large is wide-ranging. While country-specific effects are described in more detail below, we can identify five main concerns that cut across borders: psychosocial disadvantage, sexual abuse and rape, child bearing and family planning, denial of education and violence and abandonment.

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### **2.15.1 Psychosocial disadvantage**

The loss of adolescence, the forced sexual relations, and the denial of freedom and personal development as a result of forced and early marriage have profound and deleterious psychosocial and emotional consequences such as depression, lack of self-esteem, and even suicide. These impacts can be difficult to assess, but include a woman or girl's isolation and confinement to the home, inadequate socialization, and physiological and emotional damage due to repeated pregnancies. Furthermore, if a child bride is widowed very young, she may experience additional discrimination, loss of status, denial of property rights and a range of other abuses. In some cases a widow is remarried to a brother-in-law. In other cases, widows are rejected by their in-laws and their own families, left with no resources, little education and no means of earning.

### **2.15.2 Sexual Abuse and Rape**

For the vast majority of women and girls, sexual consent is irrelevant in the context of marriage. The assumption prevails that within marriage, sex is a priori consensual, and that rape is impossible. Pain and trauma are enhanced where women and girls have undergone some form of female genital mutilation or infibulations, and during giving birth (Kalkidan, 2007). As far as preparation for sexual and reproductive life is concerned, there is little opportunity for girls to receive education on what to expect, or about their rights in terms of marriage or reproduction. This puts them at higher risk of sexual transmitted infections and HIV.

### **2.15.3 Child-bearing and Family Planning**

Very few women in forced and early marriage do not have access to contraception, nor would contraception be found acceptable to husbands or in-laws. Indeed, in many societies, childbearing soon after marriage is integral to a woman's social status. In a forced marriage, a woman's right to decide when and if she becomes pregnant is unacknowledged.

This dynamic is more intense in the case of early marriage. Women who are married before the age of 18 tend to have more children than those who marry later in life. In Nigeria, for instance, modern contraceptive usage among married 15-19 year olds is only 0.6%. There are

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still a number of countries in which reproductive health services are barred for adolescents, even if they are married. However, the Population Council and UNICEF found that, in Pakistan, a substantial number of young married women indicated an interest in the use of contraception in the future.

The health risks of early pregnancy and childbirth are well documented: increased risk of dying, increased risk of premature labor, complications during delivery, low birth-weight, and a higher chance that the newborn will not survive. Pregnancy-related deaths are known to be a leading cause of mortality for both married and unmarried girls between the ages of 15 and 19, particularly among the youngest of this cohort. For every woman who dies in childbirth, 30 more suffer injuries, infections and disabilities, which usually go untreated and some of which are lifelong. The health problems linked to early marriage not only affect the pregnant mother and the fetus, but also continue after childbirth (Fatehawps and Agrres, 2004, Kalkidan, 2007).

### **2.15.4 Denial of Education**

According to Byrne et al (2006: 13), marriage often means the end of educational development for women. In the case of early marriage, girls may be deprived of vital education needed for their preparation into adulthood, their effective contribution to the future wellbeing of their family and society, and their capacity to earn and make a living. In fact, the education a girl receives is the strongest predictor of the age she will marry.

The most important documented implication of this loss is that the girl grows up with a hindered sense or no sense at all, of the right to assert her own point of view – and little experience in articulating one. This works to perpetuate patriarchal systems of gender-relations, as women are barred from participation in political, economic and cultural decision-making processes.

### **2.15.5 Violence and Abandonment**

The United Kingdom working group on forced marriage found that many of the victims suffered from prolonged domestic violence but felt unable to leave the marriage due to

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economic pressures, lack of family support and other social circumstances. Indeed, many cases of self-harm and suicide are linked to forced marriage (Pathfinder International 2006).

Some evidence has shown that women who are married at younger ages are more likely to believe that it is sometimes acceptable for a husband to beat his wife, and are more likely to experience domestic violence themselves. The age gap between partners is thought to contribute to these abusive power dynamics and to increase the risk of untimely widowhood, although some authors note that older husbands may be better providers for the household. Other studies have demonstrated that girls who marry early are more likely to get divorced than those who marry later (Ene, 1990, Amsalu, 1993). Divorce carries problems of its own, as divorce often plunges a woman into poverty. If she is married young, she is more likely to lack the skills and resources necessary to generate income. Thus, forced and early marriage contributes to the “feminization of poverty” and its resulting impact on children.

### **2.16 The Socio-economic contribution of Women**

In Wolaita community, until recently, men prefer polygamy meaning to marry more than one woman for prestige. The wives increase food production through child labor. According to Altaye (1993), a man with more than one wife is normally going to have in his family more children than a man with only one wife. In subsistence farming system, where modern technology of farming is unknown, having many wives means increased production. Similarly, an increase in the number of children means like additional farmland for the father. The children normally worked for him until they got settled down on their own.

The division of work is clearly distinct between the male and the female. The entire household burden which is heavy and time consuming, exclusively the lot of the womenfolk. According to national policy on Ethiopian women, the women work 13 to 17 hours a day and their work is ignored by their husbands: According to Anjulo (2012:12) “ although rural women’s share of division of labor is by far more tiresome and more time-consuming than that of men, it is derogatorily referred to as ‘women’s work’ and is not valued.

The domestic work of a women consists of cooking, gathering firewood, cleaning the house, grinding cereals, gardening, enset (false banana) processing, purchasing and selling food stuff,

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milking cows, looking after children and drawing water etc. But, it is not the role of women to till the land as suggested by Valenti(2013). According to Chatti (2006), the most difficult of all the domestic task of women is carrying on their back a heavy jar of water, sometimes walking barefoot for several kilometers under the scorching sun. On the contrary, perhaps the cleaning of dung reserved to women is the most difficult task in Wolaita.

Now days, the government of Ethiopia guarantees women the right to engage freely in the economic, social and cultural activities. Women do not seek to join polygamous marriage in search of economic benefit. The cash economy and western culture brought in many changes that Wogasso describes as a revolution in the traditional African way of life: “the introduction of a cash economy which coincided with meeting of Western and African cultures has produced nothing less than a revolution in the traditional African and Ethiopian way of life.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**3.1 Research method**

The study used qualitative method mainly key informants and case studies. The key informants were allowed to identify the main types of traditional marriage practices in the area. It is also used to obtain in-depth information on the procedures and ceremonies of traditional marriage that enabled the researcher to show the picture of each type of traditional marriage practices and their procedures. This study also mainly aimed to examine psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita in their own words and from their own standpoint.

A qualitative design was used to explore the psycho-social impacts of women who have been undergone traditional marriage and to know their perception towards traditional marriage. Hence, to get an in –depth understanding of the effect of traditional marriage on women psycho-social wellbeing, a qualitative design was employed. It is also more appropriate in terms of documenting rich and detailed information. Qualitative design is flexible in nature, helpful to understand real perception and life context and ability to allow the active involvement of the study participants (Kreuger and Neuman, 2006).

Qualitative social research seeks to establish knowledge of the social world by the study of people’s own interpretations of the social world (Kelly, 2011). It provides detailed description and analysis of the quality, or the substance of the human experience (Marvasti, 2004). It is also affirmed by Pietkiewics and Smith (2012), that qualitative research is in general concerned with how individual make sense of the world, experience events and what meaning they attribute to the phenomena.

Therefore, it is the most appropriate means of exploring parent’s views of their experiences and reality since this study intends to explore the nature, impacts and the coping mechanisms of psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita from their point of view. And the focus is not to show cause and effect relationship; but to explore the nature and consequence of psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita. Since

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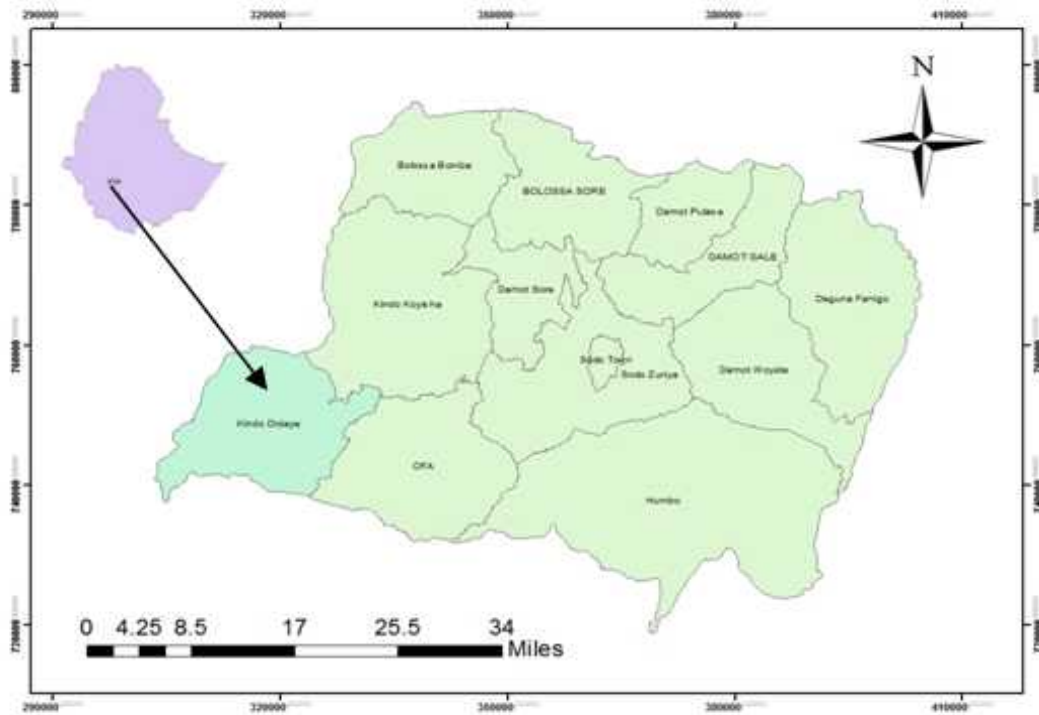
qualitative researchers are mainly concerned with meaning (e.g., how individuals make sense of the world, how they experience events, what meaning they attribute to phenomena, and so on). In other words, they are more preoccupied with the quality of experience, rather than causal relationships (Pietkiewics and Smith, 2012 p.7).

The underlined model of analysis is used in this specific research is that categorical analysis and reporting the findings on the interview and reporting at the aggregate for those similarly patterned responses of participants. The results were interpreted and presented under the discussion section. It can be appreciated that both qualitative and quantitative analyses have something to contribute. But for the sake of this research qualitative method will be employed. The aim of qualitative method is to give a complete and detail description.

### **3.1 Study Area**

The study area is Wolaita zone Kindo Didya Woreda. Wolaita zone is located in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State. It is located between  $6.2^{\circ} - 7.2^{\circ}$  N and  $37.4^{\circ} - 38.2^{\circ}$  E. It is bounded by Sidama Zone in the East, Kembata Tembaro Zone in North, Dawuro Zone in the West, Gamo Gofa Zone in the South. There are three administrative towns namely Boditi, Areka and Sodo and twelve Woredas. The topography of Wolaita Zone ranges from plain lands to plateaus hills and mountain with latitudes ranging from 1200m above sea level to 2895 above sea levels. Within Wolaita Zone, the study took place in Kindo didaye Woreda which is found 400 km south of Addis Ababa. The reason to choose this Woreda is according to the study conducted by the Wolaita culture Tourism and Government Communications (2014) that the prevalence of traditional marriages relative to other Woredas.

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**Figure 1: Geographic location of study area (Kindo Didaye woreda, Wolaita Zone)**

### **3.2 Study Population**

The study focus in Wolaita Kindo didaye woreda and their traditional marriage practice by selecting ten key informants and nine cases. The participants of the study are women who have been undergone traditional marriage and those women and children officers working in Kindo Didaye Woreda and who have knowledge about culture and who passed through the traditional marriage. The reason is that there are five traditional marriage types. From the five types of marriages, two case and two key informants were taken from each type and analyzed. The research participants are women who are or have been experiencing in the various types of traditional marriage types. When selecting participants of the study, it was very difficult to get and include all women who experienced traditional marriage. The researcher has contacted with women and children office and told them about the purpose of the study and they agreed on its educational purpose, and they helped a lot in these regards.

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Hence, the study used purposive sampling to select participants among the women who experienced traditional marriage in Kindo Didaye Woreda. Then, after the participants were selected purposively, contacts were made by the researcher through phone and direct contact with participants and they were asked their consent to participate in the study.

### **3.3 Source of Data**

The research used both primary and secondary source of data. Primary source of data were obtained from informants through case study and interaction with key informants (who have knowledge about culture and who passed through the traditional marriage) were selected for cases studies. The secondary sources of data were also obtained from the concerned bureau and when extra information is required, the researcher reviewed books, internet sources and other literatures on the issues under consideration.

### **3.4 Data Collection Tools**

The study requires generating in-depth information through key informants and case studies. In this regard, in the study, various tools of data collection were used and employing diverse methods of data collection were useful to have a profound understanding of research problems. The objective of utilizing various instruments of data collection in a complementary way was to boost the reliability and validity of the information that were collected (Kreuger and Neuman, 2006).

#### **3.5.1. Key informant interview**

The study used 10 informants to conduct the study. The informants were selected based on their knowledge about the social and cultural practices of the area. An extended interview was conducted with the selected informants.

The researcher developed interview guideline based on the specific objectives and research questions. They are made up of unstructured format of questionnaire. The researcher designed the interview guide line, serving as source of data and used pen, pencil, note talking during conducting the interview.

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### **3.5.2 In Depth Interview with selected case**

Nine women who have been married through traditional women were selected for the case study. It was employed in order to incorporate the personal experience of individuals who passed through and know the various types of traditional marriages.

### **3.6 Sampling techniques and sample size**

The sampling size determination was based on purpose in which to select the informants and case persons who critically know the marriage system of Wolaita and women who passed through traditional marriage. Later this study employed snow ball sampling technique to assess the traditional marriage practice in Wolaita. The researcher chose this sampling technique because it was difficult to get the key informants directly without participation of those persons that are affected by traditional marriage, and those that have good knowledge about traditional marriage practices. To effectively use the techniques, the researcher cooperated with the experts of culture and tourism bureau of the zone and the Woreda under study and selected nine key informants among those who have been affected by traditional marriage.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Since the researcher used the qualitative approach to analyze the data that were collected from interview, and carefully analyzed and interpreted it. Data gathered through interview and key informant interview were analyzed thematically and in conceptual way. First key informant interview will be held on each marriage types then case study will be conducted with individuals who passed through each type of marriage. Since the main purpose of the study was to explore the issue (not for generalization), thematic analysis were widely applied.

### **3.8 Limitation of the Study**

Some of the limitations are related to its explorative nature of the study. There is no prior research conducted on the issue. As a result, it was difficult to develop framework and review literature. Here, the existence of limited scientific studies in the area of the psychos- social

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impacts of traditional marriage on women. The other limitation is related to developing the interview guideline. Finally, the time and finance constraints were also the major limitations.

### **3.9 Theoretical frameworks**

Among the methodological approaches of qualitative research, case study was applied. This study applies case study qualitative method to attain the aims of the study which is to explore the nature, impacts and consequences of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita particularly in Kindo Didaye Woreda.

The researcher in here continually interprets any raw data to understand their meaning and their directives. That means, while the participant attempts to make sense of their own experience, the researcher is also involved in making a detailed analysis of these personal experience on psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita. Women's accounts were presented in the form of experiential themes (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012).

Case studies are also one of the first types of research to be used in the field of qualitative methodology. Case studies have been largely used in the social sciences and have been found to be especially valuable in practice-oriented fields (such as education, management, public administration, and social work). But despite this long history and widespread use, case study research has received little attention among the various methodologies in social science research (Mills et al. 2010).

Qualitative case study research is characterized by an interpretative paradigm, which emphasizes subjective experiences and the meanings they have for an individual. Therefore, the subjective views of researcher on a particular situation play a vital part in the study results (Starman A., 29:2013). Therefore, in this study data collection and data analysis are simultaneously done so as to effectively depict the cases in the study.

### **3.10. Ethical Consideration**

Trustworthiness refers to the criterion that is used to evaluate the truth value of qualitative studies. Trustworthiness rally first by creating an atmosphere of trust with the women during the interview phase and then after by tape recording conversations with the participants and assisting them to provide clear, vivid descriptions of their experiences (Golafshani 2003:104). Hence, supreme effort was made to avoid mistakes during transcribing and writing. During the conversational interviews with the participants, an atmosphere of trust was created so that they could share their stories in an open and honest manner.

Several ethical considerations were taken in the process of making this study. Participation of respondents was strictly voluntary based. They were fully informed about the purpose of the study. Following verbal description of the research project, the participants gave their consent to participate in the study. Therefore, informed consent from all respondents was sought starting from the beginning of the study. The ethical considerations were also aimed at preserving participants' right to self-determination and the right to be respected. Research participants were informed the information they provide will be kept confidential not to be disclosed to anyone else.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study and discusses them mainly in line with the research objectives. The chapter begins with a description on the profile of study participants and proceeds with discussion of the findings with the identified themes. In order to fully draw the picture and have a clear understanding of the cases or the family's situation, the demographic information of the psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita included within the description on the profile of each study participants. The next part of this chapter presents the natures or types of psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita. The key informants are partly mentioned in their right names and partly by their codes. This is so because in the discussion the researcher made with key informants, some of the key informants wanted that their real names should not be mentioned. Thus, the researcher opted to use codes for those who did not want their names to be mentioned in the study.

##### 4.1.1 Demographic Information of Participants

Table 1 Below is the summary of demographic information of participants

Name/code	Sex	Age	Religion	Education
C1	M	58	Protestant	Not educated
C2	M	64	>>	>>
C3	M	68	>>	>>
C4	F	76	>>	>>
C5	F	78	>>	>>
D1	M	80	>>	>>
D2	M	75	>>	>>
D3	M	72	>>	>>
D4	F	70	>>	>>
D5	F	71	>>	>>
Sarote Kuma	F	55	>>	>>
Belaynesh Bergene	F	35	>>	>>
Adanech Elias	F	35	>>	>>
Aberash Ayza	F	26	>>	>>
Bulule Bonja	F	58	>>	>>

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Balote Asale	F	42	>>	>>
Aykale Lejiso	F	37	>>	>>
Aster Sorsa	F	45	>>	>>
Darcho Dadebo	M	51	>>	>>

### 4.1.2 Major Types of Traditional Marriage Practice in Wolaita

According to D1, D2, C1 and C3 members of key informants of the study explained that marriage varies in terms of time and in circumstances under which it takes place. Its meaning and practice is obvious. Marriage is the union of the opposite sex life relationship, and the formation of family marriage exists from ancient to present. But today marriage practice varies in terms of time, ethnic group, culture and religious practice. According to them the indigenous Wolaita culture has the following types of marriage. These are:

1. Para bullachcha
2. Dosaa
3. Dafa
4. Labaa
5. Lataanne mishechchuwa

#### 4.1.2.1 Para Bullachcha

According to C3, C4 and D4 this type of marriage in Wolaita ethnic group is socially accepted. The marriage agreement is done by the families of couples and known as arranged marriage. When male couple family understands the maturity of their son, they search wife for their son. In this process, the decent should be counted carefully. In addition to this, female's profession, beautifulness, behavior and her family economic status considered as criteria. When the female full fill the criteria, the son's father goes to her family with four elders including the father of the boy. According them the elders hold leaves from the roads when they reach her family house they clear their legs with the leaves and ready to speak. Then they greet see for the family whether they are conservative or not. If they are not conservative, they allow entering to home but if they are conservative, the father of the daughter will not be at home or sit without speaking. The elders keep coming repeatedly at least for three times. After her family knowing about the asking family, if they do not want the marriage, they do not allow entering home till lastly. This indicates disagreement and they understand it.

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If family accept the marriage, they allow to enter home and ask what they want, they say “our bull exchange with your small cow” her father said we have no matured cow and they return their home. Her father discusses with the relatives when the elders came after fifteen days of their first coming. They let them enter to their house and give coffee and discuss for things that should come as a gift in their third coming and give appointment for the third and final coming. In the appointed day, the family prepare the traditional food and drinking for elders and waiting with relative and neighbors (Amoto, 19990).

The son’s family came with elder and introduce with each other both fathers sit together and they drink in one bottle and they strength relationship. This ceremony is known as “Dagguwa”. Following this, one of the elders give braslate (Sagaayuwa) for the indication of the marriage. These ceremony-related exchanges are known as ‘qommo lame’. Finally, they decide wedding day and bride wealth for family support. One case related with this type of marriage is presented as follows.

### **Case One (1)**

*W/ro Sarote aged 55 lives in Kindo Didaye Wereda. She married her husband when she was 18 years old. Her marriage with Wogaso Ayza was arranged by their respective families especially fathers. Both fathers were colleagues in trade relation. They wanted this relationship to be strengthened through marriage ties. They discussed with one another and decided to establish marriage between two families in order to strengthen their friendship. She said, “My father told me that I am going to marry a husband after one month with whom I didn’t know, and then, my father finished the process with my family and prepare for wedding. I saw him on the day of the wedding. He did this without prior introduction. I did not refuse the choice of my family due to the norm of the society. This type of marriage is usual in our family. They ordered him to bring a lot of gift for my family. He brought all things he was asked to. When he came on the marriage day, I saw him; he was too old. I could not refuse because it was already decided so that I didn’t have any choice- I started living together. I tried to escape from him, but I could not because he was so cruel that he damaged my body so many times. When I told to my family, they said don’t try to escape because you will make us ashamed. This is because in our culture, when one woman got divorced, she doesn’t have any*

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*acceptance from society even from her family. They didn't support me to escape. After two months, I became pregnant and at the mean time, life was so harsh for me because he didn't give me any love and care. Every day he came to home middle night because he drank alcohol and he disrespects me even he beat me. I didn't have any right to talk or refuse. In our home there was not enough food. One day, one woman came to my home and said to me 'I am your husband's wife and I have three children for him. At that moment, I cried a lot.' When I asked him, he said yes I have. If you don't want to live with me, you can go, so I didn't have any choice- I forgot it and just trying to live. Finally, my pregnancy period finished. When I am going to give birth, there was nothing in my home and after birth I didn't rest. In the third day, I started to work; he didn't have any love for me and for my kid. At that time, all day, I had strong headache even I can't walk properly because of my sickness my body was not strong to walk ohhhh! I don't want to remember that moment because it put black shadow on my today's life. Now I have five children, but they don't have good relationship with their father because he is aggressive and he didn't give any care for them. My first and second daughters got married even they didn't learn primary education. My third son graduated from Wolaita University but still he didn't get job because he is drug addict. My fourth daughter finished grade 10, and my last son stopped learning from grade 5. My husband passed away a year ago. Now I am managing the family by selling enjera and local areke."*

### **Case two**

*My name is Balaynesh Bergene; I am 35 years old now. I am living with my mother and with two kids because I made divorce three years ago with my husband. He was so cruel and alcoholic drunkard that he could not support his family. And hence, I didn't get any happiness and comfort in my marriage. When I got married, it was arranged by my family and my husband's family because of their strong relationship. When we got married, I was 17 years old and my husband was early 18. Two of us were not strong both biologically and psychologically for marriage so that I decided to divorce after I gave birth to my second child. Now, I am living with my mother and with my two kids. I am managing the family by selling areke; my husband does not support my kids because he got married another women, I am living in difficult condition because it is difficult to fulfill my kids' educational and other basic needs.*

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The above case as well as the source indicate parabolacha sort of marriage is the usual and arranged between two families that have strong relation in order to make relative and for their long lasting friendship but now days, this type of marriage practiced similarly even if this type of marriage accepted by family. This type of marriage challenges the rights of couples.

### **4.1.2.2 Dosaa**

One of the traditional marriages in Woliata is Dosaa. According to D1, D2 and D3, this type of marriage is arranged with the relationship between two couples. The two couples meet one situation and stay in love. The couples may know each other in different way of life. When they met and promise for marriage, the male couple tells to his mutual friends that they agreed for marriage. The female couple knows before and prepares bride wealth. The bride wealth reaches through friend. In the past bride wealth is sliver but now days it can be money, gold, watch, cloth and shoes. She holds the wedding day secretly and begins preparation. If she get good situation, she buys bulluko (traditional marriage cloth) or gabi and other things prepared. If not, she takes from the family and takes those things from her family secretly. One day she went with her friends under the pretext of work to male couple's house. Next, bride family relation starts with elders or middle man ('gaannaa') not common in past after this both family knowing and giving announcement. In this regards, w/ro Adanech Elias whose current family formed in this manner can be mentioned as a case in point.

### **Case three**

*Adanech Elias, 35 years old women, married to Ato Toru when she was 17 years. Now they have children. She said, "Unlike others who married during my time in our neighborhood, I married by my interest, but at that time, I chose him to marry to support my family for the reason that I have poor family. When I was kid, my father passed away and I was forced to support my mother and my three brothers. At that time, when I was working in hotel, my husband used to come daily to hotel. At this time, we started to communicate each other and he used to support me. I felt happy, and I loved him because before that I tried a lot of labor work to support my family, but I could not fulfill their needs. I frequently meet with Toru when he comes to hotel because both were neighbors; both of us didn't learn primary education. When Toru asked me for marriage, I didn't refuse." But she tells that when her family heard*

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*the case, they highly ridiculed her not forwarding their decision. “But later where elders from the Toru relatives (gaannaa) came to our home three times, my mother needed to let me marry to Toru.” The family allowed her marriage. She says she is lucky in marrying that way. Now she has three kids. After 10 years, I passed different challenges. There is no change in our life. I am managing my family by working as cleaner in one hotel and my husband is working as daily labor; my husband was drinking daily because of that our living condition is becoming difficult to fulfill our basic needs.” As the above case shows that this type of marriage which takes place by the agreement of the boy and the girl requires a place and time for the two to meet and form close relationship. In this regard, the main role to get married is economic back ground of her family. She decided to marry him to support her family basic needs.*

The above case shows, dosaa marriage which takes place by the agreement of boy and girl requires a place and time for the two to meet and form close relationship. This type of marriage does not give attention to the difference in socio-economic status of the families.

### **Case four**

*My name is Aberash Ayza. I am 26 years old, and I have two children. When I got married, I was 20 years old, and now I have two kids. My marriage was decided on our willing. That time, I completed grade 10, but my result was not good so that the only means to support my life was to get married. I was selling cooked potato and preparing coffee in street. After we started love with my husband, he supported me economically; he gave money, bought different clothes and shoes and showed me good love. For this reason, I decided to marry him after one month we start living together. He sent to my family (Ganna) Elders. My mother did not refuse our marriage because she could not support me since our father passed away. After one month of our marriage, I became pregnant.*

### **4.1.2.3 Daafaa**

According to C3, C4, C5 and D5, Dafa is a marriage type takes place by force through abduction. This marriage done without agreement of wife’s family and she refuse the question of the boy known as abduction marriage. The boy practice dafaa marriage by the following reasons. One, when the bride agrees and the family disagrees the marriage. Two, when family delay the wedding day. And thirdly, when her family asks bride wealth more than the ability of male family, the boy decide to abduct the girl. Most of the time, abduction practice takes

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place on market day. Before that day, the male collects enough data, about the exact time of her coming to the market waiting in the forest with his friends. When she comes, friends use and carry to his home and stay at his home in this situation. He rapes because otherwise she may try to escape. The next day, he sends elders (gaannaa) to her family elders. When the elders arrive at home, they politely ask excuse; they say we have done mistake your daughter married some one's son. The usual debates face and finally agree and finish in peace. If not, her family report to police and punish through court. But it is rare (Elias, 1990). Let me present the case of W/ro Bulule Bonja.

### **Case five**

*Bulule Bonja is 58 years old women; she lives in Kindo. She married her previous husband through abduction, and she is the mother of 5 children. He tried to convince her through his relative who lived in the neighborhood of her family, but she refused to. Then, he organized his friends and waited for the date her parents and her brother would be absent from home. As she said, one day when they want to the wedding ceremony of their relatives in the next Kebele, they forcefully took her from her parents' house and hide her in the house of his relatives far a way for several weeks till the elders mediated the case and got acceptance by the relatives of her family. The elders asked excuse for what happened and convinced them after they are tied by marriage. As she said, after the elders got acceptance they returned from the place they hide her and conducted cultural wedding ceremony and started normal family life.*

As the above case shows, Alemu opted to marry in that way because his attempt to marry through "Labaa." (A kind of marriage we shall see later) was failed. When she refused his request via his relation, he decided to marry her through abduction. As it is clear from the response of W/ro Bulule and the case presented above that the existence of culture of mediation by elders used as solution to solve the conflict that happens and likely to happen following incidence and, according to her, it is the culture of Wolaita to pardon the incidence and let the elders to enter the house of the girl's parent to talk about their future relation.

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This indicates that dafaa takes place with whom she refused and rejected the request for marriage; he decided to marry her by abduction. However, the source of officials and key informants said that this form of marriage practice is highly decreasing due to the level of acceptance by government by criminalization of the act. It is practiced occupationally among those boys who are from lower socio-economic status and the less capable of paying the bride wealth which is demanded by the bride and her family.

W/ro Bulule, who is 58 years old, is living with her one son and her current husband. But her husband has another wife with children so that he is not supporting her. She said “now I am supporting my family selling areke in the market and in my home. My four children got married; they are leading their life in early age because when they were living with me the life was so difficult because their father died when they were kids. All of them didn’t finish primary education- they started their own work to maintain their life. There is no change on my life, From time to time, it is becoming very difficult, I took my chance but I am scaring for my children because they didn’t finish their primary school. Now a day everything is difficult without education. Any kind of work requires educational background; even they didn’t learn from us any good thing. When I was living with their father, every day there was conflict between me and their father because all day he kick me, insults me even he beat the children when they refuse him to make them out from home even in middle night so they don’t have good feeling for marriage life. My two sons are living near to my home. They are not good husbands and fathers for their family; two of them are reflecting their father’s past action they are too much alcohol addict. They don’t have respect for their wife even they didn’t support their family. These reflect the impacts of our marriage.”

### **Case Six**

*W/ro Balote Asale was 42 years old woman lives in Kindo. She married her husband by abduction and she is the mother of two children. She said that “When I got married, my age was 20. He tried to convince me through his relative and my friends. But I refused because I know him he doesn’t have good behavior. As a result, he organized his friends and waited for the date of Meskal holiday. At that time, me and my friends want to dance in ‘Gaze’ (traditional dancing ceremony during meskel festival) he was following us with his friends. When the Gaze was over, me and my girlfriends were returning. Suddenly, many adult male*

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*came and hugged me. When I shouted, they hold my mouse and they beat my friends and took me away and hide me in the house of his relatives far away for several weeks till the elders mediated the case and got acceptance by the relatives of my family. Then the older asked excuse for what happened and convinced them after they are tied by marriage. After the elders got acceptance, they conducted the cultural wedding ceremony and normal family life was started.”*

*Besides, she said “I got divorced with him 10 years ago. When I gave birth to my second son, he was not supporting us even it was difficult to get basic needs. He drinks alcohol every day. He comes middle night and insult and beat me in front of my kids. After many years of such living, I decided to divorce him but my family, friends and neighbors didn’t support my idea because getting divorced in our culture is strictly forbidden, but that time, I didn’t have potential to stay in that condition. Finally, by taking my two kids, I come to my family’s home but my family didn’t show me good face. Off course, I expected such response before so I didn’t worry for anyone but my husband every day drinks alcohol and come to my family home and insult and beat me. My family for long time told for elders about his action; they advised and punished him. After that he stopped coming to my family’s home; I got rest, and I started selling tella to support my family. Now, I am happy in my life because I am supporting my kids. They are big now; my first daughter is grade 8, and my second son is grade 5. I can support them in all aspects.”*

### **4.1.2.4 Laba**

According to C1, C2, C3 and C4, laba marriage is a kind of marriage formed through convincing, lobbying or cheating a girl in different way to marry a boy. Most of the time, this marriage practiced after the failure of agreement between families when her family asks more bride wealth and if male couple family has low income and cannot cover the bride wealth. The male sends his female neighbor or his boyfriend to convince the female. Those brokers should have experience in similar work. She is pursued in market place about his tallness, handsomeness, wealth and his descent behavior and tries to convince. In laba, the male wealth and handsomeness is usually exaggerated. Sometimes they take the handsome boy instead of the actual one to convince. Following this, if she said yes and tells what she wants, then he prepares bride wealth, until the day she goes to her friend’s house and to his home with her

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female friends. Finally, his family sends elders to her family and gets recognition. The following case explains the situation of W/ro Aykale Lejiso regarding to this type of marriage.

### **Case seven**

*W/ro Aykale Lejiso aged 37 lives in Kindo Didaye. She married when she was 23 years old. She said “When I married my first husband, I didn’t know him, but my close neighbor has good relation with my family especially she likes me more than my brothers and my sisters. One day, she told me strongly that she wants to talk with me, and she said come to my home. When I went to her home, she told me that I am a big girl that my age is enough for marriage so she selected for me very nice and rich gold merchant. He is her close family. She told me that if he marries me, he can fulfill everything what I want so that I can live with him happily. At that time, I felt happy because in my family the life was so difficult that my family didn’t have anything. I have three sisters and two brothers so that I wanted to support them if I got married this rich man. Finally, I decided to marry him. After one week, he came and bought clothes shoes and gave gold ring watch and ear ring and he took me to Shakiso. When I arrived there, there was no any house it is dessert. People make tent and live inside the tent. He took me to one tent until we get a house we can live. At that time, I started crying; I start begging him to return back to my home, but he started insulting me you come by your own willing so don’t disturb me. In other words, I will kill you from this time don’t say anything. At this time, I scared for my life, and I start thinking what I could do. One day, he went early in the morning. So I used that opportunity and escape from tent and started running, but I didn’t know where I could go. After long run, I got small grass house- I want to that home. When they saw me, they fill pity they gave me water and food ,they asked me from where I came, and I told them everything and I said I want to return to my home. They made me return to my home. But as that time, when I came to my family, they didn’t support me- there was gossip from my families and my friends. After that, I married another man and now I have two kids. My husband supports my family but there is no peace between us because he is not happy by his marriage for the reason that everyone knows my past history. Sometimes my husband insults me by remembering my past history and now we are living in poor condition; life is so difficult.”*

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According to the above case and the source of officials, the girl was asked her willingness. Often deceived by the female relative, who convinced her to marry the boy by presenting the exaggerated picture of the boy's and his family status, the girl marries without knowing the real personality and status of her bridegroom.

### **4.1.2.5 Lattaanne (Mishechchuwaa)**

According to D1, C1, D2, and C3, this type of marriage is known as the inheritance marriage. This type of marriage is practiced to continue their former marriage (laataa) when the elder brother dies younger brother marries his brother's wife. The objective of this marriage is to take care of the children of the deceased (mishechchuwa). This means when the wife dies the husband marries her little sister. The objective of this marriage is for protection of the comfort of the children while living with a new husband/wife who is most likely uncle or aunt or close relative.

### **Case eight**

*Aster Sorsa, who is 45 years old married to ato Abera Alambo gave birth to four children. After six months of the death of her husband, she said she was advised to marry the youngest brother of him by her families as well as his relatives. She said "it was very hard to me to decide because he has his own wife." Further, "I was told that I would lose my little children and everything I have if I refuse to marry him. With the influence from my family and his relatives, they said to me he can support me and my kids. Finally, I agreed on their idea because that type of marriage is supported by the society. I didn't have any power to decide so that I married him after a year of the death of my husband." This day, she is in polygamous marriage. She tells that there is no strong marital relationship between her and her current husband who inherited her. She said "our relationship is often conflictual. I also quarreled with his first wife over some issues. After a year, I became pregnant but the life was so difficult that he didn't treat during pregnancy; even I didn't take enough half rest during birth. After three days, I started working because I had to support my family and my small children. But every day he come and insult and beat me and my children. After much tolerance, I decided to stop him to come to my home, but I didn't have power to make that the only solution is telling for elders. They advised and punished him so that through time he*

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*stopped coming to my home, and I started working hardly to support my family. Now my first son has BA degree. He is working in government office, and my second son is strong farmer and he is supporting us. Others are students. They have good academic performance. There is a big improvement in our life. In 2007, I got reward from my Kebele being strong and model woman farmer.”*

As the above case study shows, the one who inherits and the one who is inherited are forced by the traditional elders. W/ro Aster, the above key informant, also indicated that the one who inherits the wife of the deceased husband often has at least one wife. This is because the priority of inheriting is given to the elder brother if available. Males do not refuse, as she said. Since they need land and other resource of their brother, they are always willing to marry. But as the above case shows that the widow was not asked her willingness, further she was told that it is the only chance for her. As a result, they entered to polygamous marriage that is known for reoccurrence of conflict between husband and wives as well as between and among the wives.

According to key informants, ‘mishshechchuwa’ was part of inheritance marriage that used to be practiced in Woaltia society. In the case of ‘mushshechchuwa’ the brother of the dead husband is requested to marry the wife of his died brother in order to keep and console the wife and children of his brother. As key informant underlined, this kind of marriage takes place when there is strong positive relationship between the two families before the death of the brother and if there are little children that require the care of their brother. In this regard, the request is initiated by the husband. Though it depends on the willingness of the brother of the deceased husband, her family and close relatives are expected to highly influence and convince their sons to substitute the deceased brother as indicated. Since it is the culture of the ethnic group, the sons are not expected to resist.

As it was indicated by w/ro Aster where there is no younger son to replace the dead brother, the request extends to the close relatives of the family of the deceased brother. In this regard, the elders of both families play great role in convincing the family and their sons who is going to take responsibility. In this case, as Aster indicated, there is an oath which is named in Wolaita language as ‘chaaquwa’ that is made by both the ex-husband of the deceased and the

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relative or sister who is going to replace the deceased. The husband makes the 'chaaquwa'. In order to assure the elders that he would treat his new husband as he used to treat the former one. The brother also makes a promise to take care of the children and to respect his wife. Let us see the case of W/ro Aster whose current family formed in this manner.

### **Case Nine**

*Ato Darcho Dadebo, aged 51, lives in the area where this study is conducted. He married to his former wife at the age of 21 and after giving birth to three children, she passed away due to some accident. She was the eldest daughter of her family. As he said concerning this relationship with his deceased wife and her family he stated, "I had very good relationship with her as well as her family and relatives. Even her families consider me as their elder son." After the issue raised with the elder relatives of the deceased wife. At that time, he said that "I heard that she (younger sister) was resisting" but due to the influence of her family without delay the "chaaquwa" ceremony took place. And now they have additional five children." He says, "Though her parents are not alive now, we are having good relationship in our home as well as with her relatives."*

The above case agrees with the response of our former informant Ato Elias. In mishshechchuwa of inheritance marriage the major consideration is the kind of relationship between the husband and the wife before her death, his respect to her family and her relatives. As key informant also indicated where these factors are missing the discussion over such arrangement could not be effective. According to him, currently there is no practice of this form of marriage in urban areas.

#### **4.1.4 Major causes of divorce**

According to C1, C2, D1, D4, there are various reasons that can be mentioned as a source of divorce in Wolaita. However, majority of the divorce cause is as a result of the marriage type they have gone through and its related problems. When couples are unable to solve their marital problem through interpersonal negotiation, they prefer to have divorced as a best solution. This happens especially when they marry through traditional marriage because it reduces the chance to open discussion on any problems they encounter in their marriage life

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based on the spirit of trust and mutual coexistence. Hence, spouses often reach at this conclusion without being considered the all-out effects of divorce—either on their future life or their children. Neither of these to mean that marriage is an agreement that has always been existing peacefully nor in conflict in which couples attempt to live in competitive mode. Thus, many more compelling factors induce partners into divorce.

Informants D1, D2, D3, and D4 attested that the source of conflict are polygamy, women economic dependency on men, illiteracy and poor educational background of both spouses, physical and psychological abuse of men, very poor and respect less interpersonal communication, and exploitation and monopolization of common property by husbands have been the principal causes of divorce in the area under study. Moreover, neglect, abandonment, failure of husband to play his expected breadwinning role, kin intervention in spousal issue, peer pressure, and interference of children after the age of majority has been triggering divorce.

In the same line, D3 argued that;

*“We used to discord for any simple and complex issues and he always beats me anywhere at any time. ... In 2005 E.C as usual we slept together and in the mid-night around 8:40 O’clock P.M. local time, he began to slaughter me with a knife he prepared. I sensed a pain around my neck and waked up. He pasted me with the bed and said ‘today is your final day lain down on the bed!’ then continued to slaughter me with my nape. I struggled and escaped away with the door he opened to run out after killing me. He couldn’t seize me again because I was nude and screaming. The woman in front of my house woke up and turned the light on then I entered to her house. The woman was also very scared and screamed a lot then all the neighbors woke up and took me to the hospital calling the ambulance ... then I survived with the help of God and Wereda Administration”.*

On the other side, key informant C1, C2, and C3 argued that the major causes of divorce in the study area as; more rapidly turn down of women’s trust up on traditional family arbitration (TFA), which in effect, they appear to prefer courts to TFA, lack of knowledge how to exercise gender equality and women rights. Nevertheless, the informant appeared to be cognizant that woman’s decision towards court litigation is not guided through adequate facts

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about TFA and the court system. Participant D2 and D4 had similar views with a little contextual difference then attested that lack of trust on each other and poor communication styles are also additional or proximate causes of divorce. On the contrary, now days, perceiving court as a sign of modernization and traditional arbitration as backwardness are other factors that invoke women to prefer courtroom litigation than family arbitration.

Key informant C1 and C2 made clear their view on the cause of divorce in the area as women's use and abuse of their rights. Women are challenging men particularly their husbands by taking each and every marital discords to the public court. For example C2 said;

*“...court argument with marital partner is not the only means of exercising gender equality. Likewise, women wrongly considered that they could assure their equality with men by providing petition for divorce, getting divorced, and taking their share of common property, especially farmland. It is realized that women wrongly understood that traditional family arbitration is working to damage the interest of women and benefit men only.*

On the new dimension, C3, D4, in Zaro Kebele stated that for marital dissolution the form of marriage and familial identity issues have direct and significant impact. Engaged marriage and abducted marriage has different possibilities of divorce. Abducted marriage has higher risk of divorce than that of engaged marriage. According to the justification of the informants marriage after engagement of couples has a ceremony of wedding. On which the relatives of both couples are introducing each other and interchanging gifts among themselves. This occasion has been believed to build a stable family with harmonious communication, which in turn safe guards the marriage from the likely disintegration. In the opposite, in the case of abduction marriage, there is no ceremony at all. This form of marriage takes place when a woman refuses to marry a man then he organized his relatives and friends then abduct a woman. To this effect, the interaction among spouses becomes very weak and the communication pattern turns out to be very poor.

Furthermore, the issue of familial identity and disgracing act of one of the spouses is a potential cause of divorce. For example, beating marital partner in front of his/her parent is likely creates a non-negotiable conflict among spouses. As a result, this drives the marriage to

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end up by divorce by inviting victimized spouses parents to involve on the issue. Concerning this issue one of the informant said;

*“Once up on a time, while I was collecting coffee from my mother’s farm, he came and beat me in front of my mother and my daughter. In our culture beating a wife or husband in front of her/his parents or at public places is very disgraceful”.*

In sum, in most cases, the primary mechanism to resolve the conflict that arises in family is the traditional family arbitration mechanism. It is the most common way of resolving conflicts and disagreements in the family. However, if it fails to settle the problem, then they take it to kebele social court.

## **4.2 Discussion**

### **4.2.1 Reason for Marriage Customs and Practices**

The marriage customs among the Woliata communities are monogamous and hierarchal. Customarily, the wife comes to the husband’s parents’ village and settles there. Sometimes, if the husband’s parents are “poor” in cultivable land and the wife’s parents have extra farm plots, the husband will go to his wife’s parents’ village and settle there. In previous times, according to elderly key informants, fathers usually wed their sons to girls who live in villages at some three or more hours’ distance by foot from the son’s village, to ensure a lasting married life. The elders are of the opinion that wives coming from distant villages, and not previously acquainted with their husbands, will be obedient to their husband and in-laws. Currently, fathers arrange the marriage for their children among their village, but it should not be among people who have blood relation up to the seven generation. Marriage (is customarily a central concern for two marrying families). The two families arrange marriage for their children based on wealth, social status, and family ties. Hence, marriage is primarily an alliance between socially and economically well-to-do families rather than the union between the would-be-wife and the would-be-husband. Similarly other literatures reveal that marriage custom is a process in which the two marrying families will come together.

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### **4.2.2 Philosophical foundation of marriage and traditional marriage**

According to Burton (2008) as cited in Mundu and Unisa, (2013:4) in every society, marriage is a vital social event as individuals get involved in each other's lives and start their marital union based upon mutual and continued choice and affection. Married life gives couples emotional support and care in their lives by protecting their mental health and enables them to fulfill multiple social roles. Therefore, marriage guarantees emotional health for couples and it allows them to demonstrate higher level of psychological as well as physical well-being (Mundu and Unsa, 2013).

Many aspire to be married to benefit from the positive ends of marriage and according to Daniel as cited in Bereket (2012), in the Ethiopian society, women and to some extent men are raised to believe that one's major life goal is to get married (Bereket, 2012). However, all the traditional marriages done in Woliata community were not based upon mutual and continued choice and affection. It is an arranged and not in the consent of women. But the philosophy of marriage were married life gives couples emotional support and care in their lives by protecting their mental health and enables them to fulfill multiple social roles. Nevertheless, as seen in the above cases, the impact of tradition marriage is profound psychologically and socially. This impact is not only limited to the women but also goes to their children. Women need to benefit from their marriage life. Their children need to grow well in a way they can be built to be constructive and progressive citizens not only for themselves and for their families but also to the nation at large. Therefore, all concerned bodies need to give special emphasis to reduce or avoid the ill effects of traditional marriage in Wolaita particularly in the areas understudy.

### **4.2.3 Causes and Consequence of Traditional marriage**

It was presumed that the psychosocial effects of traditional marriage on women may vary and depend on the context of early sexuality experienced and the type of traditional marriage. The participants were asked about what psychosocial problems they experience as the result of being undergone via traditional marriage. Hence, dropping out of school, homelessness, feeling depressed, planning for divorce are found to be the major social problems. A cross tabulation of the different psychosocial effects with the women who have been undergone

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through different types of marriage, revealed that the great majority of the respondents experience sadness as a result of being married in traditional way. Worthlessness and negative self-esteem were the second major problem for those respondents who were early married and inheritance married. Similarly different studies shows that women who have been undergone in traditional marriage undergone different types of psychosocial problem.

A literature from Economic Impacts of traditional Marriage: A review of the literature by Jennifer P. (2010) shows that married girls are typically out of school, and most have little to no say in decisions about whether they should continue or return to school, limiting their literacy, numeracy, and financial skills. By virtue of their low levels of education, they are often not seen by their husbands and in-laws as capable of earning or managing finances or making financial decisions for the household (The World Bank, 2012). Those who work rarely have control over their earnings. Isolation from school, friends, and the workplace hampers their access to social support that is important to their emotional well-being, and limits their access to social capital and networks that can increase their earning potential and productive use of earnings (Duflo, 2011). In addition, married girls often lack the ability to negotiate sexual activity, contraceptive use, or birth spacing with their husbands and in many cases are unable to speak up against the physical or emotional violence they experience at the hands of their husbands or in-laws within their own homes. Similarly the different types of marriage in woliata reveal that women are considered by their husbands as property not able to earn money and go to school.

On the other study on women in traditional marriage shows that it can be considered as a form of violence against girls. Gender norms that devalue girls and women and drive the practice of traditional marriage may also promote the acceptability of violence. Many girls are married off by their families with the intention of protecting the girl from violence and sexual harassment (UNFPA 2012). In reality, protection from violence is not guaranteed, and physical and sexual violence is often experienced at the hands of the husband once the marriage has occurred. Child brides also suffer emotional violence in their homes and experience severe isolation and depression as a result of early marriage, one types of traditional marriage.

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Indeed, girls who are married early are at a higher risk of experiencing intimate partner violence than girls married after age 18. Traditional brides are also at higher risk of experiencing physical, sexual, emotional, and other forms of violence in the home at the hands of their husbands' families and in-laws. A study in North Ethiopia found that girls who married before 18 were twice as likely to report being beaten, slapped, or threatened by their husbands than girls who married later. While this does not demonstrate causality, it suggests negative effects. Violence can be physical, emotional, or sexual, and can have serious negative effects on the physical and mental health of girls, including for reproductive health.

The economic impacts and resulting costs of violence for child brides are reflected in reduced earnings and productivity, shifting investment in their households, and increased out-of-pocket costs. In addition to effects on individual girls, the effects of violence can be felt across generations, with negative impacts on children's health and well-being and reinforcing the acceptability of violence. Similarly the traditional marriage practiced in Wolaita reveals that most women have negative psycho social effect on their marriage.

#### **4.2.4 Traditional Marriage and Rites of Passage**

Rites of passage refer to ritual elements which are formed and sustained by shared rites and symbols through which people learn what is expected of them from their communities. In this regard, the Wolaita communities hold numerous values, norms, customs, traditions and belief systems. According to Helen Pankrust (1990:149), the rites of passage observed by the people there reveal the different phases of their "life cycle events" such as birth, marriage, and death. "Life-cycle events, such as pregnancy, birth, the post-partum period, circumcision and marriage, have to be discussed in this context. The welfare challenge is to avoid the conflict and outright condemnation of traditions surrounding women's lifecycle. It is not easy to distinguish the admirable from the abominable, to know where practices are best maintained, adapted or rejected. These and other rites are observed with religious and traditional ceremonies. In the traditional marriage mentioned above, is considered in Woliata as rites of marriage.

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In nut shell, as discussed in the above sections, traditional marriage had various psycho-social impacts on women in the area under study. Some of these impacts are for example in Parabullacha, the parents of the couples agree to marry their children to strengthen their relationship without the consent of the couples. Most of the time, the marriage takes place when couples are in their childhood age. This, in turn, has psycho-social impact in that the marriage takes place when they are not ready to take such responsibility. Marriage, among other things, needs physical, psychological and social readiness to effectively run the responsibly expected from it. If they are not ready, then it leads to various conflicts and divorce. Divorce brings various psychological and social problems on the women and their children.

The other types of marriage that have huge and complex psycho-social impact on women are Dafa and Lata. For example, in Dafa, the marriage takes place by abduction in which force comes to play from the side of the male to marry the one who dislikes him. This, as a result, brings continuous conflict which often ultimately leads to divorce. By divorce, women become helpless and often in depression to up bring their children. As a result, their children may not learn well and as indicated in case one, they may become alcohol and drug addict. In the case of Lata (inherited marriage), there is often conflict between the inherited wife and the former wife. The inheritance takes place not based on the consent of the inheritor and to be inherited. Thus, gradually conflicts often arise. The conflict, as mentioned above, brings various psycho- social problems on women.

In Laba also various problems can happen. In Wolaita, Laba marriage does not directly happen through direct contact between the male and the female. It takes place through third body. Those who lobby the female often do not tell the right physical, economic and social status of the male. They often exaggerate or in some cases they tell false image about the couple. As the end of the day, when they start their actual life, what she heard and imagined becomes different or may be in sharp contrast with the reality. This in turn leads to conflict and mistrust among the couples. Those who lobby most of the time tell the opposite image of the partner for example if he is poor they say he is rich and can luxuriously manage the marriage. Behaviorally too, they do not tell his right behavior. Often times, in Wolaita, the lobbyists take handsome and rich male to the female just to attract the female and to quickly

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convince her to marry. However, when she comes to home, she gets another man who may be short, dwarf or very old and poor or could be patient. In Wolaita, if a female once goes to a husband's house, it becomes very difficult for her to abandon her husband. The society does not accept the woman who divorced her husband. She can also suffer from various psychological problems that she may worry that she may not get another husband if she divorces the current husband. In addition, she could be pregnant from the husband whom she drawn false image because of exaggerated information and as a result her child may grow without the love of his father. She also worries that if she divorce, she may face economic difficulty to support herself and her children.

The only modern oftentimes successful marriage is Dossa marriage. In this marriage, couples marry based on mutual love and consent. The possibility of success of this marriage is likely higher than other types of marriages mentioned above. This is because this type of marriage happens after relatively long time relationship and therefore there is high probability for a woman to have ample information about him and vice versa. Thus, it is likely that they make informed decision regarding their marriage. As a result, the probability of conflict and divorce could be lower compared to other types of traditional marriage.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1 Conclusion**

Marriage is one of the most respected social values in many societies. It is considered as a commitment that gives rise to strong relationship based on love, trust and respect. As indicated on the findings of this research, the traditional marriage practice in Woliata have no positive effects on women holistic development for the participants of the research psychologically and socially given that they have suffered from the psychological and social challenges within their married life. Taking into account the already existing high values given for marriage within a certain society, it may seem ironic for one to abandon traditional marriage. There are instances where staying married is no more possible for some couples. In a case where finding a solution has become a dead end and compromise is no longer possible, divorce and other psychosocial treatment appears to be the best possible alternative to put an end to the enduring conflicts and intolerance between the married partners. This very fact has also been evidenced in this research. The separation of the conflicting partners will to some level reduce continuous psychological and social stress although the dissolution may have negative impacts given that the women may have invested a lot to the marriage.

**5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are forwarded.

- Elders and those that are involved in the individuals' traditional marriage and those who need divorce process should be able to provide access to preliminary psychological support for those women who are at the verge of dissolving their marriages as well as post-divorce counselling to equip them with emotional and psychological strength through the process. On the other hand, children may also be the ones in the front line to suffer from the traditional marriage families and breakup of parents. In the case of some women who have been in traditional marriage, proper frequent visitation schedules should be arranged for them in order to involve them in their well-being.

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- Responsible bodies such as psychologists and social workers need to help those women who are in need of psycho-social therapy.
- Government and nongovernmental organizations need to work hard in enhancing awareness of the society to reduce the negative impact of the traditional marriage.
- Government and local Wereda and Kebele administration should work hard in safeguarding the right of women who undergone through traditional marriage.
- Similarly, policy making bodies should be aware of the overall impacts of traditional marriage to have a comprehensive knowledge both on the negative and positive impacts of the different traditional marriage practiced in Woliata on women's well-being. This will, therefore, assist them in putting forward a non-prejudiced philosophy in relation to the impacts of marital disintegration on women, to refrain from reflecting a partial approach towards the stated issue and to implicate the overall impact of divorce on women undergoing through the process.
- Well-trained individuals in the helping professions such as counsellors, psychiatrists, and social workers should be assigned in kebele, clinics and other rehabilitation centers for identification, referral and treatment of women who has been undergone in traditional marriage. Finally, further studies employing standardized scales, including larger survey and hence robust statistical tests are recommended.
- Comprehensive strategy should be designed in terms of social advocacy, training and intervention so as to help the affected Women and children.

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APPENDIX-A

**An in-depth semi structured interview / For women who are affected in traditional marriage system /**

1. Would you tell me your name and your education back ground?
2. What is the structure of your family?
  - i. Your marital status?
  - ii. Your number of children?
3. How old were you when you got married?
4. Was your marriage based on your willing?
5. Were you happy when you married?
6. Are you happy currently in your marriage?
7. In which type of traditional marriage you got married?
8. Would you explain the procedures and ceremonies required in the traditional marriage type you got married?
9. How do you explain your relationship with your husband?
10. What is your role in house hold responsibility?
11. How is the prevalence of traditional marriage in your locality?
12. What psychological impact does the marriage brought on you?
13. What impact does traditional marriage brought in your relationship with your children?
14. Would you explain your current feeling towards impacts of traditional marriage on women?
15. What type of measures you think are important to reduce Psycho-social impacts of traditional marriage on women?
16. How do people around you react to reduce the impacts of traditional marriage?
17. What measures are required to reduce the impacts of traditional marriage?
18. Finally, if there is anything else you think is important for me to know about your experience /anything you want to conclude?

**APPENDEX-B**

**1. Key Informants' Interview/ For Elders/**

1. Would you tell me your name and your education back ground?
2. What is the structure of your family?
  - iii. Your marital status?
  - iv. Your number of children?
3. For how long you lived in Wolaita (in this locality)?
4. How old were you when you got married?
5. Would explain the traditional marriage types in Wolaita?
6. Would you explain the procedures and characteristics of the various traditional marriage types in Wolaita?
7. How do you see the pros and cons of the various types of marriages in Wolaita?
8. Which marriage type you think is good in Wolaita?
9. What is your general comment/opinion regarding the traditional marriage in Wolaita?
10. What should be corrected or modified in Wolaita traditional Marriage system?
11. Finally, if there is anything else you think is important for me to know about your experience /anything you want to conclude regarding the traditional marriage system in Wolaita?