

The Causes, Current Situation and Socio-economic Consequences of Early Marriage: The Case  
of Nyagatom Community

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of  
Social Work (MSW) at the School of Social Work, Addis Ababa University

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June 28, 2015

Addis Ababa University

Addis Ababa

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Background of the Study

Ethiopia, with over 80 ethnic groups whose cultures are unique and varied as their compositions has many beneficial traditional practices such as peaceful settling of quarrels, breast feeding, peaceful coexistence and solidarity and social integrity etc that could be model for external world. However, there are harmful traditional practices that affect the health and social well-being of women and children in the country Association for Tertiary Education Management [ATEM], 2011). Thus, Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) are those practices which violate human rights and adversely affect the health (physical) and psychological well-being; and the socio-economic participation and benefits of women and children which are deep-rooted in community beliefs, social norms and values for long period of time Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs [MoWCYA], 2013).

Regarding the global estimation, now a day ten million girls experience early and forced marriage in a year, which is one girl in every three seconds; and one in every three girls in the developing world is married by the age of 18 and one out of every seven girls in the world's poorest countries is married before their fifteenth birthday (WHO, 2005; Plan UK, 2011).

In its overall impacts over children and young women a baseline survey conducted by National Committee on Traditional Practice in Ethiopia [NCTPE], 1998) revealed that 90% of HTPs are found to have extreme negative physical, psychological, social and economical consequences in Ethiopia. Likewise, (Dawit, 2002; MoWCYA, 2013; Tigst, 2007) stated that early marriage is one of the top five HTPs registered as most hazardous and prevalent; but still accepted as customary social norm in many countries that parents push their daughters and girls give their consent as a duty and sign of respect to their family and community.

Therefore, in Ethiopia about one third of girls are estimated to be married before they are 15 and early marriage is the most common among poor rural communities believed to be the major cause for physical, social and economic problems of women Child Research and Practice Forum [CRPF], 2014; Dawit, 2002). For instance, regarding this (Dawit, 2002; Tigst, 2007; Wubegzer, 2005) stated that in Ethiopia at national level Amhara region has the highest prevalence of early marriage, with 48% of rural married women and 28% of urban married women having married before the age of 15; and 62% of Ethiopian women aged 20-49 get married before the age of 18.

And according to ICRAW (2007) in terms of prevalence with 90% in Amhara and 80% in Tigray regions, Ethiopia is one of the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. However, harmful traditional practices are not only health issues in these areas, rather they are also developmental, economical, social and human right issues of young girls and women in other parts of the country in different conditions; and thus early marriage is one of the major harmful traditional practices in the country (Berihun and Aspen, 2005; Dawit, 2002).

In common, this shows that the issue of early marriage is more studied in the Northern and North Western experience of the country than in the Southern part of the country. However, the NCTPE (1998) reported that the occurrences of 20 selected HTPs at various degrees are registered in SNNPR. It further reported that the occurrence and the prevalence is as high as other parts of the country among the major ethnic group in population size like Sidama, Wolita, Hadia, Gurage, Kebata, Keffa and others. SNNPR stands out clearly as a problem area for early marriage. Therefore, in relation to its socio-economic consequences, researches conducted by (Dawit, 2002; Rachel, 2013; Tigst, 2007; Birhanu, 2008) show that the effect of early marriage on the girl-child is seen affecting her socio-economic wellbeing

and that of the society as it disrupts the physical and mental health of a girl, blocks access to education, lead to abduction, rape, social withdrawal, migration, prostitution, economic marginalization, inability to get economic access and empowerment, powerlessness for an informed decisions, resources control and participation in community political decision making.

Similarly, a study conducted by Rachel (2013) revealed that child marriage perpetuates poverty over generations and is linked to poor health, curtailed education, violence, instability and disregard for the rule of law and its effects are harmful not only to girls, but also to families, communities and economies of countries around the globe. Therefore, though many researchers found a little bit difficult to indicate the exact consequences of early marriage as economic and social consequences. On the other hand, the issue's multidimensional nature and its associated consequences are slightly easier said than done to separate its impacts over young children. So, the attempt of exploring its particular socio-economic consequence is still unnoticed by researchers (Berihun and Aspen, 2005).

Thus, my previous knowledge of the area and repetitive studies over the health consequences of the practice of early marriage in the northern experience of the country interested me to conduct this study in the southern context particular to Nyagatom community. In general, the current study explored the causes, current situation and the socio-economic consequences of early marriage the in Nyagatom Community.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A number of national and international organizations and researchers have been conducted studies on the issues of harmful traditional practices, early marriage and its impacts from different dimensions (UNICEF, 2013; Rachel, 2013). Hence, according to literatures and unpublished documents reviewed so far, seeing its major consequences the health impact of early marriage is explored by countless researchers and international organizations. Evidencing this, a study conducted by Tabeyin (1993) on the impacts of early marriage on women the case of fistula hospital in Addis Ababa, revealed that due to early marriage and traditional cultures like abduction, around 84% of fistula patients in the researched hospital developed obstetric and vasco-vaginal fistulae and other infectious diseases. On the other hand, a research conducted by Tigist (2007) on the socio-cultural cause and consequences of fistula on Ethiopian women revealed that, the poor, young and illiterate rural girls and women suffer great from its health grievances due to the arrangement of early marriage; they are victimized by its direct impact on their overall personal wellbeing.

Giving little emphasis to other socio-economic factors, the National Committee on Traditional Practices in Ethiopia [NCTPE], 2003; UNICEF, 2011; UNICEF, 2007; Pass finder International/Ethiopia, 2010; WHO, 2014; MoH, 2014) reported that due to the tradition of early marriage, Ethiopia become one of those countries with highest prevalence of obstetric fistula in the world. In terms of occurrence, the NCTPE (2003) further documented that although early marriage is widely practiced in many parts of Ethiopia; the rate in Amhara region (82%) and Tigray region (79%) are much higher than the national average (64%) in Benishangul Gumz, (64 %) in Gambella (46 %) in Afar regions. But none of these studies documented the extent of socio economic consequences of early marriage in Nyagatom community/south omo zone. By

implication, this shows that in south omo zones; the issue of early marriage has denied to be researched from its socio-economic viewpoint. So, according to the above documents, most of the studies conducted on the problem of early marriage are still repeatedly researched from its health element as general cause and consequences. Moreover, these studies have been mostly confined to parts of Amhara, Tigray, Oromiya and few areas of the SNNPR of the country.

Assuring this fact, a research conducted by (Dagne, 1994; UNICEF, 2013) stated that early or child marriage less than 10 years is a common practice in northern Gondar and Gojjam where 75% of women marry before the of age14 and 15% marry before age10. But these researchers did not scrutinize the details of the specific socio-economic facets of early marriage; how it affects the socio economic well being of children/women. However, there are few researches conducted by way of better integration of the social and economic impacts of early marriage as a crucial harmful tradition and social problem in the country. For example, researches conducted by (Birhanu, 2008; Endris, 2008; Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Bureau of Statistics on Population [SNNPBoSP], 2005; Mulu, 2008; Adedokun and Tochukwu and Adedeji, 2012) revealed that traditions, cultural attitudes of demand for family ties, increase social status, social pressures and overstated respect for men are documented as major reasons for early marriages.

Therefore, the gap identified from most of these literatures is that the current situation, causes and the socio-economic consequences of the early marriage is not specifically studied from the context in Nyagatom community; therefore, this study has examined the causes, current situation and the consequences of early marriage in relation to its socio-economic grievances in the study area.

## **Objectives of the Study**

### **General Objectives**

The overall objective of the study is to explore the current status of the causes and socio-economic consequences of early marriage over young children in Nyagatom community.

### **Specific Objectives**

In order to achieve the above general objective, the following specific objectives were set:

To assess the current situation of early marriage in Nyagatom community,

To identify the causes of early marriage in Nyagatom community,

To explore the socio-economic consequences of early marriage over the entire life of children in the study area.

### **Research Questions**

Q1. What is the current practical experience of early marriage in Nyagatom Community?

Q2. How do the causes of early marriage affect the life of early married children?

Q3. What are the socio-economic consequences of early marriage over young children in Nyagatom Community?

### **Conceptual Definitions of Terms**

**Marriage:** refers to a legally recognized relationship, established by a civil or religious ceremony between two people who intend to live together as sexual or domestic partners.

**Early Marriage /Child Marriage:** refers to both formal marriage and/or informal unions before the age of 18.

**Forced Marriage:** refers to marriages arranged without the free will of a girl or woman.

**Polygamy:** refers to a custom of having more than one spouse at the same time.

**Dowry:** refers to the amount of money or property given to the bride's family by her bride groom or his families when a girl marries.

**Child:** refers to every human being below the age of 18 years.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

**Civil Marriage:** refers to a tradition of formal marriage concluded between couples usually acknowledged by courts.

**Child Wife:** used to refer a girl who is married at her early age and exposed to shoulder the responsibility of her family as an adult wife.

**Economic Consequences:** refers to the particular effects that a woman and girl suffer from the problem of EM in the study area.

**Intermediate Marriage:** refers marriage arranged for girls who are between the ages of 10-15.

**Social consequences:** refers to consequences that specifically impacted the overall social wellbeing of women and girls at the time of the will be study area..

**Telefa:** refers to the traditional practice of forced marriage or marriage by abduction; it is equivalent to forced marriage.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### 2.1. Concepts of Early Marriage

The term “early marriage” is used to refer to both formal marriage and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner as if married before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2005). Similarly, UNFPA (2006) defined that early marriage is any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years before the girl is physically, mentally and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and child bearing. Hence, according to Convention on the Rights of Children Article1,

*“a child means every human being below the age of 18 years, unless the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”* Though many societies have norms that bound the age of young girls to enter into marriage, many developing countries do not have clearly predetermined legal restrictions on early marriage (UN, 2011).

According to Agno (1991) early marriage is either a marriage of an adolescent girl/boy or a marriage of an adolescent girl to a matured man or vice-versa. From its psycho social facet Molokwu (2000) defined early marriage as a marriage below the age of 18 years of both spouse when individuals are physically, academically and emotionally immature to cope up the challenges of marriage.

Emphasizing the violation of girl’s fundamental rights Adedokun, Tochukwu and Adedeji (2012) stated that early marriage is a traditional practice arranged in two distinct ways of force and coercion against the basic human rights of young women either by parents or other persons who have positions of authority in the family.

Similarly, Convention on the Rights of Children Article 34(1), stipulated that:

*state parties should undertake to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; particularly the inducement or coercion to engage in any unlawful sexual activities.*

Because of the overwhelming cultural importance that early marriage has; many African countries do not enforce the illegality of forced and early marriages (UN, 2011).

Assuring this Forward (2008) stated that early marriage is a marriage arranged for economic gain by parents in rural and poor communities where young girls are regarded as economic burdens and quickly married off to alleviate household expenses. He also concluded that a daughter may be treated as commodity that the family has to be traded and sometimes girls are used as currency to settle debts or stabilize relationships between families.

Similarly, Jade and W. Cunningham (2011) identified that the continuing economic hardship in many developing countries is encouraging a rise in early and child marriage and even among populations that do not normally practice it. Moreover, ignoring other aspects they argue that early marriage is regarded as family building strategy and economic plan where the resulting transaction is seen as important financial and social survival means for the child and her family.

## **2.2. Global and National Contexts of Early Marriage**

According to UNICEF (2013) the practice of child marriage is found in every region of the globe and is deep-rooted in many parts of developing world. Hence, this organization further revealed that South Asia is home for the largest number of married girls almost half of women aged 20 to 24 or 46% were married before the age of 18 and nearly 1/5 or 18 % were married by age 15. A research documented by Rachel (2013) shows that, in terms of number India have the largest number of married girls in the world, accounting 40% of all child marriages worldwide.

The researcher also identified that, Bangladesh has the highest prevalence of child marriage in South Asia, with 66% of young women married before age 18 and 32% married before age 15.

In general, the global prevalence of child marriage is on a downward trajectory particularly among younger girls however, progress in curbing this tradition has been slow and in some places the problem remains intractable (Rachel, 2013).

Evidencing the African context, UNICEF (2011) revealed that early marriage is thriving, though early or child marriages have been made illegally by most African and Asian nations, this tradition is still persisting. For example, according to Plan UK, Helpdesk Report (2000) in specific parts of South Asia, West Africa, Middle East, East Asia, Latin America and UK a marriage before puberty is normal. Similarly, Pass finder International (2009) revealed that in North Africa, Middle East and South and South Eastern parts of Asia marriage shortly after teenage years is very common among those living traditions.

A research conducted by Tigist (2007) on the socio cultural cause and consequences of fistula on Ethiopian women revealed that, the poor, young and illiterate girls and women suffer more from health, psychological and social grievances due to the arrangement of early marriage and they have been victimized by its direct impact on their overall personal, social and economic life. On the other hand, a report compiled by the Ministry of Education/Ethiopia [MoE], 1998) revealed that out of the 50% of total women population female students make up only 23% out of the total student population and this eases their exposure to this harmful tradition. Therefore, the deeply rooted cultures of early marriage in Ethiopia could not be changed within a short period of time to spot progressive attitudinal changes. For example, the low level of access to information towards harmful traditional practices which negatively affected the reproductive health services of girls and women in most rural parts of the country is probably the reason for

this challenge. Accordingly, MoWCYA (2014) documented that about 98% of rural mothers and potential mothers have no access to information about family issues and family planning. So, “the victimization of women by harmful practices like early marriage has a serious effect over population factors, to the detriment of development aspects” (Tabeyin, 1993; p. 11).

Generally, the UNICEF (2010) survey in Africa revealed that, many African communities see early marriage as way to ensure traditions intact and make way to escape economic hardships. According to UNICEF (2013) the global context of marriage of young person’s less than 18 years is still widely practiced in many parts of the world; but remain most prevalent in most South Asia, Sub Sahara African countries and as well as Latin America predominantly affecting girls than boys in many aspects.

## **2.2. Forms of Marriage in Ethiopia**

As one demonstration of social interaction and cultural practice, marriage is arranged in different forms in Ethiopia. According to the Transitional Government of Ethiopia office of Population and Housing Census [CSA], 1991) the culture of marriage ceremony in Ethiopia is practiced in six separate tricks. These are: *Serg* or ceremonial marriage, *K’urban* or *Teklil* or religious marriage, *Semanya* or civil marriage, *Kit’asari* or marriage proceeded by provision of labor *Gered* or *Demoz* or paid labor marriage and *Telefa* or Marriage by abduction.

On the other hand NCTPE (2011) reported that there are promissory marriages arranged before or after the birth of the child by the consent of parents, which is arranged for children under the age of 10 where the bride is placed under the custody of her in-laws until the girl reaches the age of puberty, intermediate marriage is a marriage arranged for girls who are between the age of 10-14 and early adolescent a marriage which is arranged girls between the age of 10-15 in this form following the wedding ceremony the bride is sent to live with the

groom. Though these types of marriages have been existed and abide by the peoples of Ethiopia for living, they are not clearly demarcated because; according to Dana and Larsen (2006) these categories of marriage are not inflexible and are often difficult to place a woman's history in to one of these categories as she might have experienced the characteristics of many of these types of marriages in headway to her 1<sup>st</sup> marriage.

### **2.3. Current Situation of Early Marriage in Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia, like most African countries such as Niger, Chad, Mali, Guinea and Central Africa and South and South East Asian countries the issue of early marriage is still continued to be one of the leading factors for the prevailing social and economic problems faced by women and children (Pass finder International/Ethiopia, 2010).

Therefore, according to the National Committee on Traditional Practice of Ethiopia [NCTPE], survey conducted from 2003-2009 in Ethiopia 20% of the total populations of women in the country married below the age of 15. For example, the 2003 baseline survey report documented that although early marriage is widely practiced in many parts of the country, the rate in Amhara region accounts 82% and Tigray region which accounts 79% are much higher than the national average; and 64% in Benishangul Gumz, 64 percent in Gambella and 46 percent in Afar regions.

Similarly, the 1994 baseline survey in Ethiopia further revealed that there are more than 140 types of harmful traditional practices in the country and among the top five, early marriages is the one. Un covering the issue of early marriage and how it is the worst social issue; a study conducted in North West part of the country, shows that in some places marriage is arranged at the age of 3 and 4, but girls do not actually go to their husbands until they reach 9 to 11 years;

and at this early age forced sexual intercourse is attempted (Caroline, 1994; cited in Tabeyin, 1993 p12.).

Now a days, at national level Amhara region has the highest prevalence of early marriage, with 48% of rural married women and 28% of urban married women having married before the age of 15; and 62% of Ethiopian women aged 20-49 get married before the age of 18 (Pass finder/Ethiopia, 2006).

#### **2.4. Current Situation of Early Marriage in the Study Area**

Unlike cultures in the other parts of the country, marriage has very significant socio-economic values in the south omo pastoralist kinship relations and mutual co-existence (ATEM, 2011). Moreover, there is no empirically supported rich data on the rate and prevalence of early marriage and like many other regions in Ethiopia, young women/girls have little or no say to whom they will marry; thus it might be because the people of nyagatom community do not worry about their age at first marriage, thus, marriages are arranged during adolescence or even earlier (Desaalegn, 1999). For example, it is traditionally believed that if a female child is born in a certain family and when she grown up it will bring back the bride wealth paid by her father in during his marriage (Fikremarkose, 1987; Cited by Desalegn, 1999; p.30).

A research conducted by Lydal (1979) on the other hand revealed that in Nyagatom and Hammer communities girls are assets to their father and their husbands, they are also a means of creating wealth which was exhausted during their father's marriage but the researcher did not explained whether they marry at their early age or not. The Ethiopian Pastoralist and Research Development Association [EPaRDA], 2011, p.160-161) stated that:

including early marriage there are traditional practices like polygamy, inheritance of wife, mass circumcision of adolescents, abduction, cutting uvulas, clawing milk teeth, cutting and piecing

body, traditional abortion, infanticide, the practice of *mingi* or infibulations are identified as the most prevalent harmful traditional practices in south omo zone. But this document does not clearly put what are the socio economic impacts of early marriage on women and children in south omo areas.

Along with, Desalegn (1999) stated that in South Omo zones one of the major reasons for marriage in general is the importance of bride wealth payments to the girl's family; for example, the husband exchanges 110 to 140 goats and 30 to 50 kg of honey for their marriage. The researcher further stated that the recent introduction of guns and ammunition into bride wealth payments is also another factor in for the conclusion of early marriage in Nyagatom community. But the specific socio economic impact of early marriage is not documented well.

On the other hand, a study conducted by ATEM (2011) documented that with the rising levels of poverty in pastoralist society a woman is increasingly becoming commoditized and dominated by their husbands. For example according to Dessalegn (1999) when a newlywed bride is brought to her husband's home she knows that she will get beaten and when a husband beat brutally, the first thing suspected by the people is a strong desire to get goat or cow.

Regarding the social burden that girls must uphold, ATEM (2011) evidenced that due to the arrangement of marriages, girls/women face extreme work load and because of big difference in age between spouses serious conflict is being common among these communities but still it lacks more investigation regarding other socio economic impacts of early marriage in Nyagatom community.

## **2.4. Social and Economic Associated Factors of Early Marriage**

### **2.4.1. Social Factors of Early Marriage**

Birhanu (2008); Ibrahim (2008); Rahel (2007) likewise revealed that the culture of Lejihin Le Lije, long lived tradition of desire to get virginity, poverty, exaggerated respect for men or molding behavior of the girl to accept the gender norms without question (in Amhara), believe of Haadhaala, i.e. see the mother marry the daughter, culture of abduction, family honor (in oromiya), poverty and demand for inheritance of property are the major reasons for the conclusion early marriage.

Referencing the Northern and North Western regions of the country Bogalech (2006) identified the dominant reasons for children to get married in order of importance are: prolonged traditions, culture and social pressures, demand to strengthen parental relationships, difficulty of getting married if older, extreme demand to get the virginity of a girl and fear of family's victim of gossip to avoid premarital affairs in their community.

On the other hand, UNICEF (2011) reported that the basic social factors for early marriage are the desire of parents seeing their child to be wife and/ mother, the need of the family to keep one's good name and social esteem (mostly of fathers), social pressures from neighborhood, relatives and grandparents, interests for relationships with families of their choice and the desire to avoid the *Qomo Qär* stigma or fear of girls being unmarriageable at later ages and to protect them from premarital sex, which is not equally scorned for boys. According to Bell (2013) anxiety to get suitable partner for the girl to keep family's honor is also one of the major social factor for the arrangement of early marriage in most traditional societies that any delay could raise apprehensions of not being able to find exact match.

#### **2.4.2. Economic Factors**

Regarding the impacts of early marriage on the economic and demographic structure, the WHO (2014) study conducted in developing countries show that poor families marry off their

young daughters to reduce the number of children they need to feed, clothe and educate are major reasons for the arrangement of unwanted and early marriages.

Thus, the reason that many families marry their daughters too early out of accepted traditional norm is because of economic reasons in the stern of the decision made to sale their daughter; and generally the tradition of early marriage is fundamentally linked to the demand to create better and sustainable economic alliances with other well-to-do peasant families through their children's marriage (Pass finder International, 2014).

On the other hand Bell (2013) stated that marrying a girl off while she is still young is less expensive than waiting her and the groom to reach adult hood. The writer further revealed that holding several marriages simultaneously is more effective way of saving resources that usually goes to marriage ceremonies. For example, in south omo area in general, early marriage is reported to occur for a reason of desire to get excessive dowry given to the girl's family, where by a person with enough property can marry a girl at any age he wishes and her families sell her like a commodity as far as the husband pays the required amount (Dessalegn, 1999).

## **2.5. Socio-Economic Consequences of Early Marriage**

### **2.5.1. Social Consequences**

Though it is difficult to call pieces of the exact consequences of early marriage as economic and social, the researcher classified those consequences as social and economic outcomes concisely as it has multidimensional and inseparable consequences (Berihun and Aspen, 2005). Traditionally, in most developing countries many girls forced to marry early suffer from prolonged domestic violence and harassments such as abduction, kidnapping, rape, emotional aggression and gender bigotry (UNFPA, 2005). Moreover, apart from basics human rights violation and injustices, such as loss of freedom, inability to gain education and health

related problems; and young wives are denied to sense their childhood and are forced to become adult mothers before they reach adolescence (WHO, 2014).

According to Tabeyin (1993) a research conducted on the socio economic impacts of early marriage on women in Addis Ababa fistula hospital revealed that acquiring of Obstetric fistula, HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases, social withdrawals, migration and prostitution are of the major social consequences due to the conclusion of early marriage.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Pass finder International/Ethiopia (2009) revealed that its impacts on intimacy and husband-wife relation, early marriage is linked to a wife's rejection, extreme operation and patriarchal relationship between spouses and men's supremacy as resource controller in the family. Thus this in turn plunges many young girls into extreme poverty, crimes and the risk of infectious diseases and even deaths either by force or because of lack of survival options after the marriage ends up (UNICEF, 2000). Stressing this, WHO (2014) revealed that complications from child pregnancy and child birth rates are the leading causes of death for girls aged from 13-18 years in developing countries. For example, according to the [MoWYCA] department of Women's Affairs policy document report (2014) Ethiopia is one of among the top 37 least developed countries in so far as deaths resulting from child-birth complication are concerned.

#### **i. Termination of Education**

One of the most predisposed social consequences of early marriage is the extermination of education. Emphasizing this, UNICEF (2010) revealed that girl's education is the most important factor associated with child marriage almost in any country where this harmful tradition is practiced. A research conducted by Abdullah (2011) similarly shows that early

marriage of the girl child significantly affects the education of the girl; thus early marriage of a child has significant consequences over the whole community's development.

Even though it is a violation of the human rights of children due to various motives, early marriage violates and effect upon girls is far larger numbers and with more intensity (Pass Finder International/Ethiopia, 2009). More over the finding of a survey research conducted by this international nongovernmental organization exemplified that, in Bangladesh the highest rate of termination of education in almost every setting affects the betterment of the social life of the girl to indicate how early marriage reduces girl's education prospects, but a lack of education opportunities with limited employment prospects for better educated girls are some of the factors associated to child marriage as well.

On the other hand, Bell (2013) stated that educated girls or women are more likely to disagree the arrangement of early marriages however, the accurate nature of the interaction between education and early marriage is still not always evident to refer to the socio-economic and other costs imposed over the girl in some countries; because it is difficult to say low level of education alone causes arrangements of child marriage.

According to (Erulkar 2007; Mouthingi 2009) the main difficulty is that the decision by a girl or her parents whom to marry early is likely to be itself a function of the girl's educational potential. Therefore Brown (2012) asserted that independent of their academic abilities; girls who are less interested in pursuing their education may marry too earlier and might have dropped out of school even in the absence of marriage. The writer concluded that education and marriage decisions are jointly made and it is difficult to assess the specific impacts of child marriage on education attainment. Contrary to Brown's conclusion, the issue of early marriage is highly prevalent in very primitive and illiterate societies of developing world where access to basic

education is very limited and unfairly distributed in terms of cause and effect of early marriage (UNICEF, 2004). This suggests that there is also a strong association between higher age at marriage and higher educational attainment.

According to UNFPA (2007) although parental attitudes towards girls education have begun to change even in traditional and conservative societies like the rural Ethiopia, many parents in Ethiopia still believe in that investment in girl's education as wastage. On the other hand, Pass Finder International/Ethiopia (2007) suggested that to reduce the consequences of early marriage in the rural parts of the country to work on programs of income earning projects based on three major areas documented in the project of Birhane Hewan program that could raise parents' awareness towards education. Accordingly, many children and women who suffer from early marriage involve in migration and do not complete their schooling thus they are more likely to grow impoverished and face psycho-social problems.

According to UNICEF (2001) in general it has been rightly observed that there is a better tool for effective development than education of girls in developing countries: but education lowers infant mortality, promotes health, improves nutrition, raises economic productivity, enhances political participation and prepares the ground for the next generation.

## **ii. Divorce/Separation of family**

In Ethiopia child marriage less than 10 years is common, for example in the northern Gondar and Gojjam 75% of women marry before age15 and 15% marry before age10 (Dagne, 1994). According to this writer, the most recognized social consequences of early marriage include an increased risk of divorce, physical damage to the girl's reproductive organs and migration; however for most parents divorce is healthy to practice to get a good match for a daughter outweighed these negative consequences.

On the other hand, the Minority Right Group International [MRGI], (2008) reported that early and forced marriages and bride wealth, as well as discriminatory inheritance of property are common in most developing countries ; to mean that it is difficult to seek a divorce where there is a practice of early marriage. This document further explains that, it is extremely difficult to invalidate a marriage union in many pastoralist societies. According to International Center for Research on Women [ICRW],(2007) determined that divorce is a big social problem unpaid for concluding early marriage in most traditional societies where by many girls run away from unhappy marriages and full of a husband maneuver and violation of women's right, absence of freedom of existence and psychological crises.

According to CSA (1993) in terms of ethnicity and religious view relatively high divorce is more common among the Amhara ethnic group than among the Oromo ethnic group and more common among Christians than among Muslims in Ethiopia. There may be several explanations for this for example, Tefera (1994) stated that in Ethiopia approximately 45% of all first marriages end in divorce within 30 years, 28% of first marriages end in divorce within the first 5 years, 34% within 10 years, and 40% within 20 years due to related problems of arranging early marriage.

### **iii. Social withdrawal**

In most conservative traditional societies, a girl is forced to marry only in her family's interest and in such instance, if that is not her desire a woman either must move away from her locality to escape that social burden and discomfort laid over her or remain socially neglected (Plan International/Ethiopia, 2004). Therefore, coping with the unfamiliar inside and outside the home creates an intense loneliness and feeling isolated in life and this in turn lead to complete social withdrawal of a girl and traumatic personal or psychological problems (Dagne, 1994).

According to a study conducted by Nawal M. (2006) in some cases girls who marry at an early age tends to feel loneliness and mild social isolation as these girls assume their new role as wives and mothers they inherit the primary job of domestic workers. The writers also stated that in this regard, girls often embrace their fate and bear children quickly to secure their identity, status and respect as an adult and responsible member of their community unless, they may be socially isolated and face nonstop gossip.

From another social dimension Muller (2005) stated that many pastoral women are less informed about the issues of sexuality including HIV/AIDS and STDs related information as they are married off at their early age, they are less likely to prevent HIV infections therefore, after acquiring it many girls feel ashamed and isolated and even commit suicide. Yet the writer gave due emphasis to the health consequences of early marriage.

#### **iv. Prostitution**

One of the major social consequences of early marriage is linked to prostitution. Dana and Larsen (1997) argued that prostitution is mainly come from the lower economic strata and environmental inconveniences such as cultural operations to produce money in a given society.

Argument by Muller (2005) on the other hand specifically claimed that, women will be resorted to prostitution if their economic conditions get worst due to several factors within the social seating, thus one of those social settings is the practice of early marriage. The writer further documented that, in pastoral and boarder areas if a girl is entered in to an un happy and less affectionate marriage relation which effect in operation and domestic violations by husbands, she can easily be exposed to migration and prostitution.

#### **V. Migration**

According to UNICEF (1996) in most pastoralist community early marriage has been cited as the major contributing factor for the rush of girls to move to urban areas due to inconveniences in marriage/divorce and has been connected to the trafficking of girls across borders for marriage or prostitution along borders. According to Dagne (1994) due to men's exploitation and domination by in-laws, many girls or women are not able to create supportive social or economic networks through family or friends therefore, they are more likely to get divorced and abandoned at their young age then migrated. On the other hand a study conducted by International Organization of Migration [IOM], (2003) stated that migration is one of the risky social consequences for traditional community dwellers where the practice of early marriage is culturally welcomed and seen as social criteria being practiced. It also in sighted that the link between mobility and HIV infection particularly for urban-rural migrations as very high.

Contrary to the above evidences Dana and Larsen (1997) stated that migration is caused when either of the spouses married at their early age are interested in other person as they grew older and then separated; finally conflict and migration becomes their fate mostly real for women. In general, in most traditions of developing countries women who marry at their early age are more likely to run away from home and become exposed to risky human behaviors in cities including prostitution and crime because of unwanted marriage condition (UN, 2005).

#### **Vi. Abduction /Kidnapping**

Traditionally, abduction is usually followed by early marriage in rural areas where a man abducts a girl without her intention as many rural little girls go far to fetch water, collect fire wood, buy goods, look after goats and son. But amazingly, men are not perceived as rapist and could not even think the risk of it and being punished MRGI (2008). For instance in SNNPRs, abduction is done for social reasons because of fear of rejection/refusal by the girl's family due

to status consideration in the social, economic, ethnic and /or religious factors; as it is done without any previously set tacit of understanding between the wedding parties. Thus, the immediate and long-term effects may perhaps be grievous Southern Nations Bureau of Population Statistics [SNBoPS], 2005). According to Clark (2004) the state of exposure to domestic and sexual violence of girls who are married early are more likely to be abused sexually, physically and emotionally than women married lately.

In Ethiopia the prevalence of marriage by abduction is as high as 92% in some Amhara regions and averages nationally at 69% (UNICEF, 2005). An International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) study in India shows that, girls who married before age 18 reported experiencing physical violence twice as often and sexual violence three times as often girls who married at a later age (UNICEF, 2000). Regarding this UN (2005) uncovered that most children both in rural and urban areas of developing countries do not usually tell and report when they face sexual abuse and labor exploitation even within marriages; due to this reason, many girls and women leave their place of origin and expose to deviant behavior and crimes.

According to (MRGI ,2008; Save the Children, 2006; UNICEF, 2000) in Ethiopia other violations are clearly criminalized but rape and abduction as part of the marriage ‘process’ are considered perfectly acceptable as culture, these organization’s report further revealed that, sometimes unwanted and early marriages arranged for young women in some rural areas of developing countries led to commit suicide.

### **Vii. Excessive Work Load**

In Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, there are taboos in place that prohibit men from undertaking some tasks deemed suitable only for women. This can often include collecting fire wood, fetching water, look after cattle and preparing food are tasks that a man would be

ridiculed for undertaking (MRGI, 2008). According to the study conducted by Dereje (1999) in Nyagatom and South Omo in general as a man's herd accumulates, additional wives sought to form a polygamous household where a senior wife directs the labor of the junior wives who are expected to provide the majority of the family's labor this is concluded at early age of girls. The writer further stated that these junior and little wives will shoulder the heaviest burden but are afforded even fewer rights than pastoralist women in general.

## **2.5. Economic and Demographic Factors**

Besides the prolonged consequences of early marriage on the health issue of social affairs, the specific economic consequences of early marriage have been not that much studied by local researchers in Ethiopia. For example, according to [SNBoPS] (2005) in south omo zone the existing studies on early marriage and HTPs in general don't cover and document all ethnic groups; its impact on economic and social development is also not seen; thus there is a need for more descriptive and exploratory research on this social problem. So, According to National Committee on Traditional Practices in Ethiopia [NCTPE], 1998) the major contributors for high number of ever born children, larger family size are, early marriage, abduction and polygamy in the rural areas of south omo zone; on top of this, these communities are a believer of having many children as wealth contributes for the high population growth in the region in turn causes socio-economic discrepancies.

According to Dagne (1994) due to men's exploitation and domination after marriage in the family many women are not able to create supportive socio economic survival networks through family or friends therefore, they are more likely to get divorced and abandoned at their young age and this in turn lead to un employment and economic dependence.

For example in Hammer and south omo area in general, the husband is expected to pay 40 to 50 heads of goat or cow , 20 to 30 pots of honey or butter and much kg of coffee to the girls family in the form of dowry (Dessaiegn,1999). The writer also stated that the husband pays this all usually within 3 years; and it is a social reality and becoming social issue in most cultures of North Ethiopia making young girls as a means of survival option for parents with the cost of their little girl especially in most parts of Amhara region (Pass finder International, 2010).

According to EPaRDA (2011) in some countries, the dowry decreases as the girl gets older and due to this reason many girls have been commercialized; this in turn may tempt parents to have their daughters married at younger ages in many traditional societies.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Method**

^ In this section the overall research methods that were applied for the examination of the causes, current situation and the socio-economic consequences of early marriage in Nyagatom Community were elaborated. To investigate the problem under study, exploratory type of research was used.

#### **Research Design**

In order to examine the research question and the practical reality in the study area, I have used the cross sectional research design; because it examines varieties of a social phenomenon at a single point in time (Newman, 2004).

The nature of social science research problems might let researchers to decide on matters like selection of research population, details of the research participants and/ or selection of respondents for a particular social phenomenon by applying different data collection instruments (Newman, 2004). So, initially the study assessed the current situation, then it looked into associated reasons for the arrangement of early marriage and described how early marriage impacted the socio-economic situation of early married women, finally the study explored what the socio-economic consequences of early marriage are in the study area.

^ As it is mentioned above, the research approach that was employed in this study is qualitative research. The application of qualitative research approach for this kind of social problem is more appropriate because qualitative research approach helps us to grasp people's situation, experience and attitude by using their own language and statements in their own particular context (Dyck, 1993). Qualitative research approaches help the researcher to uncover associated factors to conclude early marriage and its socio economic consequences.

Fundamentally this is so, because the task of exploring the socio-economic consequences of early marriage tries to emphasize the subjective lived experiences of each of the research participants from their own living experience.

The application of qualitative research methods enabled the researcher to assess and explore the depth of the current situation under investigation, its associated socio-economic factors and consequences over women in Nyagatom community in general. More importantly, it was focused on: “identifying the absence or presence of particular phenomena in the accounts of different groups, exploring how the manifestations of phenomena vary between groups, exploring how the reasons for or explanations of phenomena or their different impacts and consequences” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, pp. 50-51). Moreover, qualitative methods are particularly well suited for studying “a practical value of importance about which little is known in order to describe phenomena in detail and to explore topics that are difficult to study by other means.” (Karloff, Dan & Dietz, 2008, p. 83).

Therefore, to get the basic and relevant information that could answer the research questions of the study, an in-depth interview, semi-structured interview and FGD data collection instruments were used. More importantly data collected through an In-depth interview and Focus group discussion were highly applied. In addition to these sources, personal observation, books, annual reports of researches, conventions, journal of articles and local and international conference reports were also used.

### **Research Instruments**

The nature of the problem studied in this research authorized flexibility of research instruments that could be more pertinent to undertake this study. As it is mentioned above, in-depth interview and focus group discussion were primed to explore the research problem.

### **In-depth interview**

In-depth interview is one of the most appropriate methods for the research problem conjectured since in-depth interviews “provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 140). Accordingly, in the language of Nyagatom, series of in-depth interviews were conducted with early married women, both sexes of parents of early married women and key informants in the community. In this regard, the researcher purposefully obtained the views of key members of Nyagatom community assuming that they know well about the current situation, associated causes, experiences of the socio-economic conditions of early married women and other relevant information related to this study. This in turn provided the researcher with more insights about the socio-cultural and legal aspects of these victims and its associated socio-economic implications over the community in general.

### **Focus group discussion**

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is another most relevant data gathering instrument that will be administered to gather the reality of the problem at hand. FGD is relatively naturalistic exchange of ideas and draws on peoples lived experience, thereby, providing insight that cannot be obtained by other methods (Wilkinson, 2004). Focus Group Discussion is also very important for this study; because “if you are interested in exploring an issue that has not been studied before, you could ask several individuals to come together and share their views on the topic.” (Marvasti, 2004, p. 23-24).

### **Study Area**

This study was conducted in Nyagatom Woreda; Nyagatom Community/South Omo Zone. Geographically the woreda is located to the southern part of the country. The Woreda is located in the North, Selemago woreda and Benchimagi woredas, in the South Dssenech woreda,

in the East Hammer woreda and in the West, Republic of Kenya (Nyagatom Woreda Bureau of Tourism and Development Bureau, 2015). The woreda is composed of three major communities: Nyagatom, Murule and Kuyugu. Seven others they call “clusters” of the Nyagatom community groups are Ninileyakol, Nyisiyakol, Nyarich, Nykabugning, Nykumama, Nyikore and Nyibuny ethnic groups (NWBoTD, 2015).

The economic activity of the community is animal husbandry and small scale production of vegetables along omo river (Nyagatom Woreda Bureau of Finance and Economic Development, 2015). The total area of Nyagatom woreda is 2,183.6 km<sup>2</sup> above sea level.

According to the 2007 Southern Nations population and housing census, the woreda has 25, 252 residents, of this 12,389 were females and 11,863 were males.

### **Sample Selection**

The sample respondents of this study were that of purposefully selected early married children who are currently living in Nyagatom community during the time of the study. These early married children were also those girls whose age was between 13-17 and who are living with their husbands in the time of the study. It was done because in this community the majority of child wives are known for suffering from early marriage.

Therefore, the researcher purposefully selected Nyagatom community out of the three communities in Nyagatom woreda. Since child wives are afraid of their old husbands, the researcher therefore, purposefully excluded their husbands. This being the case, parents of early married women and concerned key informants such as local elders and concerned government bodies in the study area were also participants of the study.

The sample of this study was heterogeneously set in a sense that it included each of early married women’s family unit with their distinctive socio-economic traits and based the intention

to explore the socio-economic impacts of early marriage that are particular to the experience of each of early married women's family and their parents socioeconomic context in Nyagatom community. These was done for the purpose of looking the practical experiences of early marriage, its associated factors in each family's experience and to explore the holistic feature of the socioeconomic impacts it laid over early married women in each family. Sample respondents for the study were selected using purposive sampling technique. This technique is more relevant when a research is focused on descriptive situations of people under investigation (Newman, 2004). This purposeful sampling was conducted over those early married women whose age was not more than 18 and who are currently living with their husbands in time of the study. Accordingly, the first sixteen (16) purposefully selected research unit of analysis (participants) were identified with the help of well informed individuals who are living in the area, local government officials and other volunteers who knew the case at hand. In doing so, the in depth Interview was carried out this way up until the data collection process had come to an end.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

For the purpose of creating convenience to engage research participants in the series of interviews and the FGD, I have used the following inclusion and exclusion criteria in this research.

**Inclusion Criteria:** I have engaged the following participants:

- Early married women whose current age was between 13-17years during the time of interview and FGDs.
- Permanently residing early married women and their parents of the study area and
- Both of the parents of early married women who have arranged early marriage for their children were included.

**Exclusion Criteria:** as it is mentioned above, I have excluded the following groups of the community. Accordingly,

- Kuygu and Murule communities of Nyagatom community were purposefully excluded.
- Married women above 18 years were also not participated, as the problem under investigation does not concern these age groups.
- Considering the sensitivity of the case under study and engage child wives freely, husbands of early married were also purposefully excluded.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Since qualitative data are collected in the form of text, written words or phrases in social life, its analysis is less standardized unlike its counterparts of the quantitative (Newman, 2004). Accordingly there is no clear agreement in the process and rule of qualitative data analysis (Newman, 2004). Nevertheless, for this particular study thematic framework is employed to analyze the data. For proper management and analysis of the data, coherent flow of ideas of the interview and FGD were tape recorded and I also took field notes in time of my daily field work. Following the completion of data collection, audio materials were transcribed and translated in to English because the interviews and the FGDs were conducted in of Nyagatom language. I had two individuals as translator and facilitator from the community dwellers. With regard to the structure of data analysis, the data collected from the interviews, the focus group discussion and literature reviews were categorized thematically. This was then broken down into sub-themes and concrete concepts.

In doing so, after identifying major themes and sub themes of the responses, category numbers were then given to each raw data. The raw data were then distributed to the identified thematic areas based on similar contents. Finally, I have summarized the data and then based on

the major themes I did my analysis at the end. During the research analysis, all of the major themes and sub themes were discussed in detail in line with each objective of the study. I maintained the consistency of ideas throughout the entire paper by organizing the main themes based on the research objectives and research questions. In this process, I made continuous reviews to the original raw data to see new clues and check if there are missed themes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Since this study concerns many aspects of the impacts of early married women in their family I made a considerable care to ensure that the research is compiled with the necessary ethical responsibilities. This was done because husbands are not interested in this regard.

For this particular research, all participants were made aware in advance of the purpose and objective of the study. They were informed that the research was undertaken for educational purpose and therefore does not involve any remuneration for being part of it as research participant.

All research participants were asked in the first place, their willingness to participate in the research including the possible use of tape recorder while in the process of administering the interview and the focus group discussion. They were also informed of the confidentiality of information given for this particular undertaking. In general, respondents were only asked to give their oral consent, for the research does not include any potential harm to anyone involved in the research. Nevertheless, research participants filled out a consent form.

### **Limitation of the study**

This thesis has produced plentiful information for deeper understanding of the socio-economic consequences of early marriage over women and children. However, there were limitations that hamper a comprehensive analysis of some aspects in the study. These challenges

and limitations of the study could be seen to involve some issues. Firstly, when analyzing data, it was found necessary to depict the exact social and economic elements out of each of the response of the study participant's as the causes and consequence of early marriage which was time consuming. Secondly, the attempt to gather individual's experience in their family throughout the 2 round FGDs was also difficult. Thirdly, I found the financial cost, time and energy cost difficulties in the long journey to the study area.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Finding**

As it is exploratory and descriptive in nature, this study looked into the socio-economic consequences of early marriage in Nyagatom Community. For this purpose, the research participants were asked about the existing experience of the socio-economic consequences of early marriage. In this regard, the study initially examined the current situation of early marriage. Secondly, reasons of early marriage were assessed. Thirdly, the research participants were asked to entail the occurrence about the social and economic consequences of early marriage. Finally, the study explored the socio economic consequences of early marriage.

This chapter presents each of the aforementioned core research objectives and/or research questions of the study. Accordingly, profiles/back grounds of the research participants in this study were confirmed by their interviews and FGDs. In doing so, in the first place, the study examined current situation of EM in the study area. Secondly, it explored the associated economic and social factors for the arrangement of EM. Finally, the researcher did in depth analysis and examination on varieties of the socio economic consequences of early marriage on women and children in the study area.

### **Background of the Study Participants**

The study was carried out to examine the socio-economic consequences of early marriage on women/children in Nyagatom community. To explore this problem, a totals of (28) individuals were participated in the study. The first, 16 participants were selected for the in depth interview. Accordingly, a total of 10 selected participants were interviewed from early married women. The other six (6) were selected from key informants who were asked from concerned government bodies and community elders. The remaining (12) twelve individuals were

participated in the two FGDs which lasted for 2:30 hours. Accordingly, the first group of the FGD was composed of six early married women, while in the second group six parents of early married women were participated having six (6) members each. Moreover, in addition to the in depth interview and FGDs; semi structured interview; personal observation and previous knowledge of the area were also utilized. In order to generate the required information and look locally documented data from government offices, I have used semi structured interview.

Thus, a total of twenty eight (28) individual's response was collected in the form of primary source of data through an in depth interviews and FGD. Out of the total research participants of this study, three (3) were found degree holders (they were key informants: from Nyagatom woreda health office, Nyagatom woreda first instance court and Nyagatom woreda bureau of finance and economic development). There was one diploma holder who was interviewed from office of Nyagatom woreda women and children affairs). Seventeen (17) of the research participants have primary level of education: in which all (16) of early married women and one (1) of the key informants have attended their primary education. Seven (7) of the research participants have below primary level of education (i.e. all (6) of the parents of early married women and one (1) of key informants or community elders). In this case, BA/BSC degree was the highest level of educational attainment of the education back ground of research participants.

As this is being the case; nineteen (19) of the research participants were females (sixteen from early married women, one from parents/mother of early married women and two from key informants). While the rest nine (9) were males (five parents/fathers of early married women and four key informants). So, the age of all the units of analysis was between the ages of 13-17.

The following table summarizes the overall demographic characteristics of study participants.

Demographic Characteristics	Respondents' Category				
	Early married women	Parents of early married women	Concerned bodies and key informants	Total	
Below primary	0	6	1	7	
Educational background of participants	Primary	16	0	1	17
	Diploma	0	0	1	1
	BA/BSC	0	0	3	3
Total		16	6	6	28
Gender	Male	0	5	4	9
	Female	16	1	2	28
Total		16	6	6	28
Age at time of the study	13-17	16	0	0	16
	Above 18	0	6	6	12
Total		16	6	6	28
Religious status	Christians	16	6	4	26
	Muslim		0	2	2
Total		16	6	6	28

Table 1- Participants' general information

As it is illustrated above, the study was conducted over early married young girls who are between 13-17 years of age. Accordingly, for the purpose of this study, 16 early married women were purposefully selected with the help of health extension officers, lawyers and voluntary research facilitators in the community; it was done because the situation of the targeted group was not homogeneous. Therefore, to identify who were married earlier, who have been attending maternal health care services, how did they marry, what was their living and other relevant information were gathered with positive cooperation of the above mentioned research participants.

Regarding the socio-economic back grounds of the study participants it was observed that they live in different living conditions. For the realization of these, I purposefully asked key informants from the Nyagatom woreda health office, lawyers from Nyagatom woreda first instance court and Nyagatom woreda bureau of women's and children affairs. This was done because there was no clearly documented data about the participant's age, marital situations, socio-economic conditions and other relevant information of the problem under examination except information obtained from these research participants.

The other research participants of this study were consisted of both parents of early married women who have arranged early marriage for their daughters and key informants (from concerned government bodies and community elders). Given the sensitive nature of the issue, I purposefully excluded the husbands of early married women as the research participants, because as it is traditionally known that husbands are not willing to deal with issues related to exploring their marriage situation.

To attain the research objectives and explore the current experiences of practicing early marriage and its socio-economic cause and consequences understudy, the researcher interviewed

a total of six key informants: two females from Nyagatom woreda women's and children affairs bureau and voluntary woman in the community. The other four males were participated from Nyagatom woreda bureau of finance and economic development, Nyagatom woreda first instance court, Nyagatom woreda health office and from members of elders in Nyagatom community.

The other major primary source of data for this study was a two session's focus group discussion arranged for the research participants. Accordingly, I have conducted a total of two separate FGDs of 2:30 hours. The first FGD was composed of early married women whose age was between 13-15 and currently living with their husbands/children in Nyagatom woreda.

In the second FGD parents of early married women were participated: five (5) were fathers and only one (1) was a mother of early married women. In the course of the focus group discussion intended to conduct for 4 hours, only 2:30 hrs of discussion was conducted, because I found it a little bit difficult to engage all FGD research participants for long period of time.

In doing so, the expected range of ideas pertaining to the existing socio economic consequences of early marriage was explored. Finally, the response of the FGD participants' was audios/videos recorded and translated into Amharic because it was conducted in Nyagatom language. Then, I transcribed all the responses in to English. In doing so, ideas on what is the current situation of early marriage, what are the associated factors for early marriage and what are the socio economic consequences of early marriage impacting the lives of women and children in the study area were explored. Accordingly, the response to the questions: what is the current situation of early marriage in Nyagatom community was replied by the respondents with a slight difference. But, in order to answer the research questions and keep the easy flow of ideas raised by the respondents I have categorized them in to two relevant sets as follows.

Firstly, I have assessed the responses of the key informants which are mainly devoted on the existence of the current situation whereby how parents of early married women or the Nyagatom community in general practice early marriage. Secondly, I explored forms of early marriage in the study area and categorized contents in relation to the research question. Finally, I summarized the responses of the research participants. In all my ways; I have assessed what the current situation of early marriage look like in the study area. Therefore, the study explored answers for each of the research objectives and research questions in the upcoming sections.

### **Current Situation of Early Marriage in the Study Area**

Although there was no specifically well organized documented data on the socio economic consequences of early marriage in the study area, the analysis of research participants' view unveiled dissimilar points on the idea of the current situation. The responses obtained from the key informants revealed that, early marriage has been practiced for many years. They stated that marriage for Nyagatom community means everything; it is a manifestation of their natural, social and economic collaboration, solidarity and peaceful co-existence.

Despite cultures commonly associated to the socio-economic reasons, the rising level of poverty, polygamy, inheritance of wife, abduction, hereditary ownership of property, conflicts and illiteracy were argued as causes; the study explored that the major reasons for practicing early marriage is exclusive to economic interests of parents. One of the research participants stated that: "currently many children are forced by their parents and other closed family limbs suffer from early marriages in terms of their social and economic affairs." (Participant One, Thursday, 2 April, 2015 Nyagatom Woreda). Moreover, realities obtained from the research participants reflected that, the general preconditions set for the arrangement of early marriage in the study area are exceedingly linked to the rising levels of poverty where parents exchange their

little girl for large amount of dowries. Regarding this reality, one of the interviewees in this research stated that:

*in our culture, as far as a girl is physically normal and behaviorally calm, she is not just a child for her parents but also valuable asset too; because she has many social and economic values in our pastoralist society and parents of a girl are considered lucky since their parents get dowries when they marry these children and improve their life. So, we respect girls as we use out of them and as you see, the existing economic survival options for all of us is hard. Therefore, we start to look other options to escape from bad economic situations. To do that, the culture of early marriage has very good answer in our life, as we get lots of goats, cows and other relevant goods in exchanging for a daughter* (Participant Two, Monday, April 13, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

The data generated from participants revealed that, in order to accumulate more and more wealth with the dowries they get, parents who have better economic conditions are also sale their children by arranging forceful marriages. The response of research participants revealed that women and children have been victimized by the practice of early marriage. Hence, the key informants stated that the typical forms of traditional marriages include *Telefa* or/marriage by abduction, polygamy and marriage by wife inheritance. These existing practical forms of marriages have been practiced for many years. Beside, common marriages like *Semanya* or legal marriage and informal unions are also practiced by members of the community. But regarding the practical forms of early marriage, this study explored that intermediate marriage; (it is a marriage arranged for girls who are between the ages of twelve to fifteen) is common. This type of early marriage is being practiced for two important reasons. In the first place, the girl's age matters the amount of the dowry she brings to her parents. When the girl's age proceeds to her

teen, the demand of the girl and the amount of dowry given to her parents will be bare minimum. Second, the girl's ability being easily controlled by her husband and her potential to give more children in her life is also highly concerned. Therefore, the community's alignment to this form of early marriage is also associated to the fast growing nature of girls. One of the study participants in this research stated that: "It is the warm weather condition itself made little girls to be old looking and this in turn affects girl's situation to be chosen by husbands and marry earlier" (Participant Three, Sunday 19 April, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

For the second research question that is: what are the reasons for the arrangement of early marriage in Nyagatom community; the research participants answered it in different ways and argued thoroughly. To answer this, respondents of the first category claimed the social reasons for the arrangement of early marriage. They stated three social driven factors. In the first place, they claimed that early marriage is caused by cultures of polygamy and abduction. Secondly, they reflected that it is caused because of conflict between neighbors. Thirdly, the respondents argued that early marriage practiced as it is important means of social protection. Lastly, they stated that low level of education among the community as another social reason.

Contrarily, participants of the second category thoroughly debated on the major economic reasons for the arrangement of early marriage. Therefore, the study participants reflected three significant economic factors. Firstly, they stated strong desire to get excessive dowry motivates parents. Secondly, poverty or lack of another economic option as economic reason for early marriage.

### **Associated Factors for Early Marriage in the Study Area**

As it is mentioned above, the analysis in the first category declared that, factors for early marriage are socio-cultural.

#### **Social Factors**

Research participants in the first category claimed that early marriage is socially established culture in the study area. According to their response, the cultures of polygamy and abduction were identified having an aggravating impact over the practice of early marriage. Accordingly they stated that, although these cultures are blindly welcomed, they have socio-cultural relevancies for the community. Therefore, details about the cultures of polygamy, abduction and parents desire to get social protection/security; the low level of education and frequent conflict as socially established factors are presented in the upcoming section.

#### **Polygamy**

As it was shown above, the analysis of the respondents in the first category shows that, polygamy is associated to the arrangement of forceful marriages and it was explained in to two important contexts. The first was the intention to build extended family and; the other was interest to safeguard the wealth of husband's family.

In terms of building extended family, the respondents of the first category stated that polygamy at the outset is practiced with husband's initiative to get a blood tie with the girl's family. In this case, they stated that as far as a man has capacity to afford the excessive amount of dowry asked by the bride's family, more often her parents do not care about their daughter.

The respondents also claimed that the age difference, the health of the husband and other aspects related to this kind of marriage are not seen as problems. In this regard, parents do not be uncertain to give their little girls to an old man once they secured a dowry. The key informants

also stated that parents and early married women have almost a zero level of understanding concerning the side effects of polygamy. It was also explored that parents of girls whose age is preceding their teen, worry about to whom they marry their aging girl, it is because traditionally no one has place for an old girl and pays a huge dowry for. In those situations, with no question parents welcome early marriage without consulting the girl. The respondents stated that, polygamous marriages are practiced only when the husband wants the marital tie with the bride's family and if she is calm and attractive too. Therefore, this study examined that the practice of polygamy has encouraging impact over the potentials of early married women to have more children and remain a mother of many children in her young age. Moreover, the response of one of the research participants revealed that:

*the practice of polygamy is aggravating the situation of early marriage in our area; because I know that most parents need economic alliance with the richest family to improve their living condition.*(Participant Four, Tuesday 14 April, 2015 Nyagatom Woreda,).

Evidencing this reality, a response generated from research participants shows that:

*One day in the morning, two old guys came to my house and asked me to give my 14years old girl for a 69years old man as his third wife. For the time being I refused to say ok and later on I decided to think over it. For one thing, my family's economic situation enforces me to give my daughter because her will be husband is better-off than us. On the other side, my daughter's age was also on the proceeding of her 14<sup>th</sup>; so her mother and I were worried very much. Finally, to accommodate both situations, I sent my agreement to the man and then I arranged the marriage. At that time, I asked him 165 goats and sheep, 45 bulls,30 cows, 15'safety machine'/fire arms and many other goods in exchange for my daughter. He gave me almost all of the expenses within one year because; he was one of the*

*richest individuals in our community. Finally, with the dowries I got, I started to rear my own cattle and living a better life than ever before. So, her marriage has changed my life and all families are now enjoying their life. But before her marriage, my families were living in a real low economic condition; we had no better option to change our life I even want let her elder sister to marry person like this one.*

(Participant Five, Saturday 2 April, 2015 Nyagatom Woreda).

### **Abduction**

In relation to the culture of *Telefa* or marriage by abduction and its linkage with early married women, the respondents in the first category looked the following two mutually exclusive facets. First, they stated abduction due to husbands' failure to pay excessive bride price; and the other abduction for the reason of competition to get a girl.

Concerning husbands' failure to pay traditionally asked excess amount of dowry, the key informants stated that when an individual is attracted by a girl but found that he could not afford the required amount of dowry, he automatically abducts the girl. Participants in this category stated that *Telefa* is usually practiced when a girl is on her way to fetch water and collect fire wood or look after children in villages. In order to do this, the abductor organizes groups/families/friends by carrying fire arms to get the wanted girl. Moreover, the key informants stated that it is sometimes practiced in the form of revenge when there is conflict between families. Sometimes conflicts occur in the course of abducting and protecting the girl. However, after 3-5 days of the girl's disappearance, the abductor sends village elders to parents of the girl and begs them to marry their children for him. In this way, parents of the girl and the abductors agree and decide on the date for the full payment of a dowry in place of the girl then after the first round payment of the dowry, the girl's parent decide to conclude the marriage. In

this case, the research participants stated that the abductor is usually given 5-10 years to pay a dowry from the start of the first payment to the end of the whole amount of dowry. This study therefore, examined that the abductors/husbands often make excess loans (usually cattle) and this loaned money is not paid back on time and thus it causes economic crises and conflict among this community. The study further explored that abduction is one of the social effects of arranging early marriage and sexual violence over young women in the area.

### **Frequent conflict**

According to the response generated from research participants, conflict is one of the social factors contributed for the arrangement of early marriage in Nyagatom community. In this case, the key informants stated that disagreement on grazing land, failure to pay bride's price or/dowry, ease access to fire arms, poor infrastructural facilities (in terms of organized police force) and lack of awareness about the negative consequences of conflict were identified as the most fundamental causes for frequent conflicts in the study area.

Claiming conflict as a cause for concluding early marriages, the respondents stated that in most cases groups of ethnic clusters fight due to pretexts typically linked to the above mentioned rudiments. In this case, they stated that both of them find their mobility and survivals difficult in those scenarios. Therefore, the study explored that, in order to settle disagreements parents of early married women in the researched community arrange early marriages to one of the quarreled groups in the form of peace conciliation. In this case, the key informants stated that these forms of conflicts are very common among members of communities within Nyagatom community and south omo zones in general. According to their response the common conflicting districts are Nyagatom against Dassenech and Hammer. Sometimes they fight the neighboring

communities along Ethio-Kenyan boarder especially along Lake Turkana regions. Regarding this, one key informant's interview witnessed that:

*Including nyagatom, the practical reality about the cause for the conflict between these members of the community is, the better access to get fire arms by many of them. Moreover, I can tell you this confidently the government has almost no role in keeping the peace of the society in this area and even the people have more weapon than the policemen. When conflicts occur, between Nyagatom and other ethnic groups, conflicting parties immediately get ready to hit back them because here there is better access to gun though they do not use openly. (Participant Six, Friday 30 April, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).*

Therefore, according to the response of this category, without their will, children are being commoditized and presenting as strategic weapons for peace settlements.

This current study also confirmed that, in pastoralist societies like Nyagatom, marriage has divergent meaning beyond just a marriage arranged for a husband and wife and it also assured that socially ambitious arrangements of EM are used as bridges for the fundamental economic causes.

### **The need to get social protection**

The explanation made by the respondents in this regard revealed that the need to get social protection/security by the girl's family is factor for the arrangement of early and forceful marriages. According to the response of the first category, the need to get social protection/security is demanded by parents who have better economic condition (in terms of more cattle, goats and sheep). In this case, the response of the study participants indicated that, rich parents of a girl's arrange early marriage for a family who could actually protect their

wealth. Therefore, the respondents affirmed that, it is usually done when these rich parents are robbed their cattle/goats and they face resource competent to their previously controlled or places of grazing land. In this case, the key informants stated that for this very reason parents give their daughters for a husband who could secure their social condition and arrange early marriage. Usually, parents are successful in this regard because, a husband guards his wife's family in time of dangers or /robbery by either local or boarder communities. Confirming this context, one the research interviewee stated that:

*I always thank my God for his blessings because he made me father of five daughters. A year before, I sent my 13 years old girl to her uncle in Jinka town for better education but, she came back. Even though, I am not well educated, I always deserve to see my daughters be better educated outside nyagatom. But, this year, in her 15<sup>th</sup> years, 67 years old man asked me to marry my daughter. He is actually from one of the majority ethnic cluster in our community. He has been working at higher office in our woreda for many years. But I refused to let him marry my daughter. His families pleaded me a lot to arrange the marriage but my stance remained same. Later on, the devil saw my 46 cattle and they were raided by robbers along the border area and I become so challenged to raise the remaining cattle even after that moment. Then, I decided to get the man and asked him to help out me from this situation. After continuous trails of getting the raiders, I heard the verdict of some of the raiders' months before. Finally, I decided to let him marry my daughter even with minimum cost of dowry and security for my life in the area. Now, she is pregnant and we become bloodily tied.*

(Participant Two, May 4, 2014, Nyagatom Woreda).

### **Low Level of Education**

According to the respondents of the first category (of the respondents who claimed the social reasons are factors for EM), the existence of low level of education was identified as the problem of both parents and early married women in the study area. The response of the research participants reflected that there are three themes for how low level of education causes early marriage in this study area. Firstly, they stated poor parental attitude towards education as cause. Secondly, they stated the engagement of children in routine domestic activities as another factor. Thirdly, the mobile nature of the people's living was stated as reasons for the existing of low level of education. Accordingly, for the poor parental attitude towards education as cause the respondents claimed that lack of better economic options, parents of early marrying women become more enforced to exchange their girls for a dowry than educating them. Therefore, the key informants in this regard stated that, parents poor attitude towards the values of education is caused, because the economic value of marriage is greater than educational values. Furthermore, the respondents also stated that in terms of facilities like road constriction, clean water, health centers, poorly equipped schools and remoteness of the area contributed a lot for their lowest regard.

The respondents in sighted that its remoteness is raised as cause for fear of some diseases and this in turn blocked the coming of different teaching professionals to the area. Therefore, this study explored that although there are mobile schools (teachers' team) female students do not attend it regularly and despite 13 formal schools are constructed in the study area; it could not created awareness for both parents and their children about the impacts of early marriage on the lives of young children. Thus, one of the key informants said that: "Due to these reasons early

married women's right to education and awareness towards the values of education is remained very limited" (Participant Three, Saturday May 9, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

### **Economic factors: Desire to get excessive dowry and poverty**

Dismissing ideas claimed by the first category in the above description, respondents of the second category notably argued that economic factors are most significant reasons for early marriage in Nyagatom community. In doing so, respondents in this second category identified two mutually interrelated practical milieus. Accordingly, the first category in this respect claimed that the most important reason attached to the economic factors is parent's strong desire to get excessive dowry from the groom's family; whereas the response of research participants in the second sub category revealed that poverty was another economic factor for the arrangement of early marriage in Nyagatom community.

### **Desire to get Excessive Dowry**

In view of the research participants, the existing intermediate practical form of early marriage in the study area is fundamentally practiced for reasons of strong desire to get a significant amount of dowry in the form of bride's payment. Majority of the respondents in this category revealed that dowry is asked for three significant reasons. Firstly, they stated that when parents once confer their daughters, they know that the husband has absolute power over the newlywed girl and he also knows that he paid for this customary expectation. In this regard, the research participants assured that, a husband can do whatever he wants over his wife as he paid for her. Secondly, they stated that a dowry is asked seeing that it is cultural retribution for what parents/fathers of early married women were asked in time of their marriage. Here, the respondents stated that parents' of early marrying women are fascinated to regain their wealth back that they paid for the parents of their wife years back.

Thirdly, the respondents revealed that the cost of wedge and domestic burdens placed over their little girl in her marriage as another ground. The key informants stated that a mother of early married women teaches her daughter how to grind a mill in her early age. In this case, the current study explored that a girl suffers more after she gets married. Parallel to this, the response of the FGD participants revealed that, parents of early married women recognize that the bride price must compensate the marital inconsistencies after marriage. Therefore, according to their response, because of these major interests behind, parents' great economic motive to get the huge amount of a dowry made the life of early married women very worse. Accordingly, the research participants of this category further confirmed that because of parent's high regard given for girls (as precious asset in the family) their desire to get excessive dowry in place is worsening the socio economic situation of early married women.

### **Poverty**

Besides the above mentioned economic grounds, the research participants in the second category identified that the rising level of poverty is stated as another factor for the arrangement of early marriage. According to the argument made by many of the research participants three important causes for poverty were stated. Firstly, they strictly stated that the culture of providing extreme cares for their cattle as a cause; this in turn made the people of Nyagatom community remain poor. Secondly, the participants stated that lack of access to another economic option except animal rearing as another factor for poverty. Finally, they asserted that the culture of positive regards for having too many children (especially preferring female children) as reasons for poverty in their context. On the subject of the case of providing extreme care for cattle as a cause for poverty, the respondents in this category stated that the people prefer to die than selling or slaughtering their animals for minor problems. And according to the key informants, early

marriages are caused in order to get more cattle as bride's price than losing the existing few. Therefore, the research participants in this regard stated that in order to escape economic discomforts, parents of young girls are enforced to arrange early marriages.

On the other hand, concerning the idea of lack of access to other economic alternatives except animal rearing as cause, the key informants alleged that due to the fact that the community are living in animal husbandry; thus they lack another economic options and therefore, they see their daughters as one means to safeguard their economic condition by concluding early marriages. Regarding this the response of the FGD revealed that poverty is often linked to the strategy to create wealth opportunity and strengthening the economy of relatively better economic life bearing families of a girl. According to the data gathered over this aspect, these situations in turn significantly aggravated grounds to arrange early marriages. In line with this argument, one of the research participants quoted that:

*I am from low income earning family. When I marry my husband, I was 13. One day my father asked me to give him lots of money urgently. I replied, oh father where can I get you this much money? And he said that, he had options for me to do this. First, I was asked to get the money right now in any way. Second, I had to marry and let him get the money that he needs. At that time, I know nothing about marriage and my answer for the second option was silence. But finally, after passage of some days, my father told me that he was arranged my marriage and I was forced to marry the 64 years old man last year. In place of me my father got huge amount of dowry like cows, bulls, goats and machines. Now they are economically changed, they have many cows and bought many others cattle too (Participant Four, Friday 01 May, 2015, Nyagatom Wereda).*

Concerning the positive regard for demanding too many children as a cause for poverty, the respondents stated that in order to get females, families commit repetitive sexual intercourses, in the assumption and reality that daughters have more economic values than boys. According to the key informants in this situation when parents lose the chance to get a daughter they face economic insecurity in their family related to costs to feed them.

### **The Socio-Economic Consequences of Early Marriage in Nyagatom Community**

Although it was difficult to investigate aspects that are accurate to the social and economic consequences of early marriage, the idea of exploring the specific socio economic consequences of early marriage in the study area was debated across many distinctive points at a time. The debate and discussion was tenderly revolved around the different socio-economic consequences of early marriage in the study area. Consequently, the research question that is what are the socio-economic consequences of early marriage in Nyagatom community; was comprehensively debated and explored by the study participants. It was discussed under two sets of categories.

Firstly, the response on the social consequences of early marriage was thoroughly explored. Secondly, the economic consequence of early marriage was explored. Finally, contents of these socio-economic elements were summarized in to major topical categories. In doing so, the respondents in the first category claimed that the social consequences of early marriage in the area are domestic/sexual violence, extreme work load inside and outside, extermination of education and high risk of HIV/AIDS and STDs.

On the other hand, respondents in the second category argued that the economic consequences of early marriage include excess numbers of children per family, unfair property ownership right given for early married women and passive economic enrolment of early

married women as specific economic effects of practicing early marriage. The details of the respondent's idea asserted in these two categories are presented below.

### **Social Consequences of Early Marriage in Nyagatom Community**

#### **Frequent Domestic Violence**

Regarding frequent domestic violence that women encounter in their marriage, the research participants in the first category synthesized their violence in terms of three major forms of inside home violence. In doing so, they stated that physical harassment such as frequent beating by husbands, sexual harassment/forceful sexual intercourse, dominance/disrespect or wife's rejection as domestic violence.

#### **Physical Harassments**

Regarding the physical harassments early married women are facing, the key informants identified that frequent beatings and insults were stated as very common forms of violation against women's right in their family. The respondents in the first category asserted that, once early married women enter in to their husband's house and become a wife, they have no right in any respect. In this regard, the response of research participants confirmed that the traditional belief held by the community made women to be considered as properties of their husbands. They stated that, after they get married, a number of domestic violations are applied over young wives in the study area.

The respondents further assured that it is commonly believed that women have to be beaten and husbands are very serious in this regard. Moreover, the respondents in this category said that, husbands beat their wives because of the assumption that women are their bought assets. Confirming this reality, one of the key informants in this research stated that husbands of

Nyagatom community have ‘full right’ to beat their child wives even until their wives got scars on their body. (Participant Eight, April 1, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda )

Regarding this, the study explored that no one asks husbands for their evil actions done over the young children in an open air however; most of the time young girls are not interested to divorce their husbands in those situations. Verifying this situation, the key informants further stated that when the community sees a scar on the body of somebody’s wife, they say “oh! she has got brave husband; she is lucky”. However, opposite to this idea, one of the interviewee stated that:

*My husband always blames me for everything. He always beat me for every silly mistake. His usual pretexts are the price tag he paid for my parents, my irregular refusals to have sexual intercourses and his desire to shape my behavior as he wishes to be. Especially when I become tired of doing other chores and hesitate to have sex, he gets mad and he start to beat me brutally. As my husband is not my age mate, he does not want to make me feel free even spiritually. I might be free only may be he goes to the field but at night while he comes home, I expect at least one lash out. Any way I am living adopting it.*

(Participant Two, Tuesday May 5, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

### **Sexual harassment**

In the courses of exploring the social consequences of early marriage, the research participants in the second category affirmed that the practice of sexual harassments like forceful sexual intercourses for pregnancy is identified as one form of the domestic violence. Regarding the practice of forceful sexual intercourse mannered over a child wife, participants in this category stated that it is very frequent action made over the newlywed girls.

The response obtained from the FGD participants revealed that, frequent sexual harassment is synthesized in to two important practical sets. Firstly, they identified that a

husband commits unimpressive sex because he thought he remunerated much money in the form of dowry to his wife's parents and make sure that he is courage of doing it. Secondly, the respondents stated that it is done for knowing the status of their wife's fertility (to get more children preferring females).

Concerning forceful sexual intercourse, they also asserted that to check the fertility of the newlywed bride and to get more daughters, early married women are extremely harassed by their husbands in. In this case, one of the interviewees of this category stated that:

*From my first day I sleep with my husband until he recognized that I was pregnant, he has been enforcing me to have sex with him every day. Actually sexual intercourse is not new for him because I am his third wife. But while I asked him why he did these to me he tells me that because his earlier wives could not give him daughters. Therefore, at that time without any complain to his acts I had been tested for months whether I could conceive female offspring or not and fortunately, I gave him a daughter last year.*

(Participant Nine, Tuesday, 5 May, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

### **Oppression and wives Rejection**

With regard to internalizing the state of men's social and economic dominance, disrespect or wives rejection shown for early married women in the family, the study participants in the third category identified that there are three major reasons for it; they argued that extensive bride's price paid by a husband, the poor economic contribution of a child wife and the existing big age gap as contributing reasons for husband's domestic operations.

Regarding the extensive bride's price paid for women, participants of the third category argued that daughters are seen as precious assets of their parents, thus they are exchanged for a husband with huge amount of bride's price in the form of dowry. Concerning this, the research

participants stated that once a girl is married, it is publically known that she becomes a property of her husband. Consequently, the respondents further assured that for this very reason, a child wife is oppressed or/dominated by her husband. At the end, the study explored that because the husband thinks that he paid excess bride's price and he knows he is the only one to govern his bride in the family; thus, he disseminates any action over his wife in the any affair. It was also examined that early married women do not divorce their husbands in all of these situations.

Confirming this reality, one of the research participants acknowledged:

*As far as my parents were paid extensive dowry in place of me, I do not have option to escape whatever my husband does over me even kills me. When my parents let married me two years back, they needed the dowry badly and I knew that my husband already bought me in place. But at the same time I needed my family's economic change with dowry they got. Although I suffer from his extreme operations in my marriage, I let my parents live better life. When my husband noticed my parent's improved economic situation, he usually beats and insults me aggressively. He always tells me that I am his property and my parents are saved because of him. Of course, I remember that my parents got enormous number of cattle, honey and other materials.*

(Participant Ten, Tuesday 5 April, 2015, Nyagatm Woreda).

Pertaining to the idea of women's poor or no economic contribution in the family as a social consequence due to arranging early marriage as cause for operation by husbands, the research participants in the third category revealed that: because of their extreme dependence over their husband's resource, early married women have been extremely dominated and oppressed by their husbands. They stated that beyond executing other domestic tasks women in the study area have no option to perform and support their husbands in economic issues. Thus,

according to the respondents of this category early married women and women in general become socially, economically and emotionally oppressed by their husbands every day.

Confirming this reality, one of the key informants stated that:

*let alone the women, men have no alternative economic options here; most of the time husbands expect their wives to engage in other activities and support them. When you see other activities, there are irregular activities like selling milk and milk products organizing them in to small cooperatives etc. But the infrastructural facilities are poor and thus women remain at home than involved in these activities in Nyagatom community. (Participant Ten Tuesday 5 May, Nyagatom Woreda, 2015).*

On the other hand, concerning the women's age at first marriage, the analysis done over the response of the FGD indicated that the two major contexts for operation and disrespect shown towards early married women are big age gap between the husband and his wife and traditional perception the society in that all women are inferior to men as another reason for women's disrespect and men's dominance in the family. In this view, the response of the FGD participants and the key informants showed that the age gap is reasoned as a cause is for the assumption that early married women are treated as if they are very child in their marital relationship; thus husbands dominate them in every aspect in their family.

### **Extreme Work Load: Inside and Out Side Home**

Considering the extent of work load that a woman shoulders as the effect of early marriage, the respondents argued over many ideas. They synthesized the extreme work load executed by early married women in their family in to two major categories. The first category stated that the inside home domestic workloads include: grinding of mill, child caring or rearing, counting of cattle and preparation or provision of food for their husbands. The respondents in the

second category stated that fetching water, collecting firewood and helping parents of husbands as outside home domestic burdens of child wives

### **In Side Home Work Loads**

#### **Grinding Mill**

With regard to exploring the practice of early marriage in its social effects, the research participants in the first category identified that grinding mill is one of the most arduous domestic chores of early married women in Nyagatom community. They asserted that although it is considered as sign of bravery for women, the intensity of its harshness for early married women is not internalized. The key informants in this regard stated that as child wives are physically not matured, they could not easily perform this activity every day. The response of the first category revealed that early married women have been involved in this domestic chore because firstly, they stated that their husbands hit them unless they get food when they come back at night; secondly, they had no nearly established access to grinding machine to prepare food for their kids in their area. Assuring this reality in the study area, one of the research interviewees stated that:

*When I was living with my parents I prefer to work other domestic activities than grinding mill because, it is hard even for my mother. But my mother always tells me that it is one criterion to be chosen by husbands. After I marry, I am forced to grind mill every day. Unless I do it, I have nothing to prepare fast foods for my children and my husband. I do not have any better option. My house is far for everything and because I could not go far leaving my baby. I had no easy access for the grinding machine here. I must have to do it in my everyday life and my hands are not just hands but I also used them as machines to grind. (Participant One, Sunday 26 April, Nyagatom Woreda)*

### **Rearing/Caring for Children**

Concerning the inside home workloads carried out by early married women, the response of the second category showed that rearing or taking care of children is one of the most routine tasks of young girls/women. The research participants in this category were asked about how they execute their daily in side home tasks, and they replied that taking care of children is one of their most common in side home daily routine of early married women. Regarding this, the respondents in this category argued that the nature of their husband's survival made them to stay outside home however, even if they stay at home; they are not interested to assist their wives. In this regard, the respondents further stated that due to the childish nature of early married women to shoulder heavy tasks in side home, their children could not get proper sanitations and other maternal cares. Thus this study revealed that due to early marriage, child wives suffer from responsibilities related to child care. The research participants of this category further stated that the responsibility of child care becomes very poor when early married women bear more children within short birth intervals. Proving this, one of the research interviewees said that:

*I have two children. Before I give birth my husband does not allow me t work more but after I bear children he forgot me. He spends more time outside of home but hates to keep, care and play with his kids. I guess, it is because he thinks that it is just my job in the family. I can say am the only one for my kids to take care of them. Although I do have many other tasks in my family, I always try my best to take care of my children. Sometimes my children become sick of meseals and I become nutty and even hit my children feeling that I am alone to shoulder all these.*

(Participant One, Sunday 26 April, Nyagatom Woreda)

Acknowledging this reality, research participants in the FGD communicated typical cases in point. The analysis made to responses obtained from the FGD and key informants revealed that, spouses who don't have positive relationship develop a worsening situation in their shares over their children and family. The study also confirmed that this situation leads to poor child care and extreme work load over the child wife inside the family.

### **Every day counting of cattle**

In addition to the aforementioned domestic chores inside home, wide ranges of ideas were spelled out by the research participants in the third category. They stated that counting of heads of cattle is another inside home workloads shouldered by early married women.

The research participants in this category revealed that it is one of the daily routines executed by child wives. It is examined that traditionally women are expected to count heads of cattle after their husbands came from grassing fields at night. The respondents also stated that husbands see this activity as sign of respect shown by their wives; hence in order not to lose this they let their little wives count cattle every day night. The key informants stated that whatever the situation of the girl/wife is; even sickness, she has to count the cattle every day night. However, if husbands exactly understand her condition they do it by themselves. Assuring this reality, one of the respondents in this study stated that:

*My husband has many cows and goats. In my first touch of counting our cattle, one day night I fail to let him know the exact number of the cattle. He asked me their number angrily but I remain silent. Finally he started to hit me badly. Then I told him crying that I could not proceed counting them beyond 59. Thereafter, my husband counts our cattle by himself but through time I recognized them in their appearance.*

(Participant Two, Sunday 26 April, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

The investigation made by this research showed that these inside home workloads impacted child wives and it was revealed in terms of affecting their physical wellbeing, relationship with their husbands, sanitation of their children and their morality.

### **Outside Home Workloads**

Regarding the effects of early marriage in relation to the outside home work loads shouldered by women/children in the study area, the study participants in the second category identified that there are three major outside home tasks of early married women. They stated that fetching water; collecting firewood and provision of food for their husband as outside home workloads done by child wives in the study area. Regarding the task of fetching water, the study participants in this category revealed that early married girls have been suffering from travelling long journey on bare foot to get water. They stated that though they are born and grown up there, they have been fed up of doing this task every day. The research participants confirmed that girls bring water carrying big pot on their slimy back walking many kms per day.

It was asserted that, what worsen this situation is that they perform it every day by carrying their children and after the long journey they even come without getting clean water. In this regard, the research participants further claimed that although the practice of EM caused all of these challenges; the poor infrastructural facility and natural setting of the area have been aggravating the danger of early married girls. Examining their every day duty of girls in the study area, one of the interviewees quoted that:

*I remember when I gave my second birth; on my sixth day I left my newly born toddler with his sister at home and went out to fetch water. I did this for one thing, my household demand was higher at that time because I had to wash my baby per week and do other things with; on the other hand, my husband expects me to give him food when he came*

*back home from the grassing field. It was hard for me to adjust my life in those days. What I could do by the time was just praying to God. Even now I do not have options to get water. I still go far to find water for my domestic use. I always ask who is blamed for these things in my life* (Participant Three, Sunday 26 April, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

In terms of collecting firewood as another outside home daily routine of early married wives, they were asked to entail their experiences. The respondents answered that to get fire wood they move many kilometers away from their place of residence per day. They also asserted that it is quite normal activity of women in the study area but it was said that, it is the most energy and time consuming daily activity of child wives in the area. Confirming this fact, the respondents stated that during summer season trees get soaked and a wood could not be easily found and not suitable for immediate use. So, the study explored that in those times girls are enforced to get dried out but buried wood out of the sand near Omo River and it also revealed that in order to meet wives role in the study area child wives are striving very much.

According to the key informants and the study participant's response, the culture of firing/smoking the whole night around their house consumes more wood this in turn made this task hard for early married women to carry out this activity. The respondents also stated that the fire/smoke is done to protect their cattle from outside enemy/wild attack because cattle spent the night outside; even sometimes husbands sleep with them. In this regard, the study examined that when there is fire or smoke around home, mostly enemies/cattle raiders or wild animals do not enter/come close to the house.

In terms of security aspects, the respondents further stated that girls are being attacked by another person especially if there is a disagreement between her husband or her communities, she become intentionally victimized by the enemy as revenge.

The analysis made over the extreme inside and outside home workloads revealed that early marriage impacted the lives of child wives in terms of physical, social and economic arenas of their family and the community at large.

### **Termination of Education**

In examining the problem of extermination of education as social consequences, the research participants of this category argued that it is not directly associated to the practice of early marriage in Nyagatom community. However, the respondents stated that girl's school drop outs is indirectly aggravated by the practice of early marriage in the study area. Thus, it was contextualized by the research participants in to two important viewpoints. The research participants in the first category stated that, extermination of education was sensed in terms of the highest economic value given for girls as hindrance of attending education was identified.

Contrary to the response of research participants in the first category, participants in the second category claimed that extermination of education is associated to the poor infrastructural facilities. In doing so, respondents in the first category argued that early married women have been ceasing their education because of the traditional belief of their parents have in girls than boys. And thus, the respondents in this category assured that in order to get the high amount of dowry, parents enforce young girls to marry at their early age than sending them to schools.

The key informants also stated that parents are not interested to send their daughters to school. Regarding this, the respondent exemplified two important reasons; firstly, they stated that low regard that parents have towards education as one factor. For this, they argued that the comparison of the values of education and benefits obtained from early marriage and marriage in general is inconsistently compared to educating girls. Secondly, the respondents stated that parent of early married women are not interested to send their daughters to school is associated

to the fear that education made girls to disobey their husbands. In this case, the respondents further verified that girls are born as an asset for their parents and properties bought for their husbands. Accordingly, examining the low regard held towards education and high economic advantage of marrying young children by the society, this study explored that parents of early married women strongly believe in 'selling' their children with excess dowry than educating them costing many things for her in the family.

Consequently, dismissing the idea raised by the research participants in the first category, the response of research participants in the second category argued that, the existence of poor infrastructural facilities such as lack of educational materials, low number of teachers and facilities set for teachers have directly impacted the extermination of girl's education. So, in view of that they stated that these poor infrastructural settings in the study area made young girls to stay at home and vulnerable to the practice of early marriage as an option of life. Concerning the idea of in accessible nature of schools and poor educational material access with the extremely hot weather condition of the study area, the study participants in the second category stated that young girls become enforced to marry very earlier and this also paved open way for the victimization of their education.

In this regard the research participants in this category generalized that the distance nature of the existing poorly furnished schools, frequent closure of schools and irregularity of schooling have created extensive grounds for parents to arrange early marriages in the study area. In line with these practical reality therefore, one of the research interviewee said that:

*I prefer my daughter let marry at her early age to educate, because if I send my daughter for school, she could not attend it easily as it is very far and the schools here are not working regularly. Education is boring and every year it claims our daughter's age by its*

*inconvenient program. For example if you send your children today, the schools could not proceed the next day and the whole year functioning; there you stop educating your daughter again next year the same thing happens. Therefore, whatever the school setting improved soon, I do not want to let my daughters learn because the long lasting value of it in my life is not good-looking.*

(Participant Eleven, Sunday 10 April, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

### **High Risk of HIV/AIDS and STDs**

Regarding the risks of HIV/AIDS and other STDs in the study area, the key informants stated that the practice of early marriage might result in higher rate of infection of HIV/AIDS and STDs. The information obtained from almost all of the key informants revealed two major grounds for the exposure of early married women to these diseases. Firstly, they claimed that the correlation of the cultural practice of polygamous marriages of young girls to an old man as major ground for the trouble-free spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs due to the arrangement of early marriage because they stated that mostly parents give their daughters to get the dowry so asking about test for HIV and other STDs is unthinkable.

Secondly, the respondents of the research participants argued that the low level of education in the study area as another factor related to the high tension of spreading HIV/AIDS and STDs while arranging of early marriage for the high risk of spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs in the community. Confirming this data gathered from one of the research participants said that:

*I feel happy because I have arranged marriage for my first daughter to the rich man. He is very calm and has good name in our community. He married my daughter because his wife was died two years before. As far as he wanted my blood relation, I do not have to reject this marital tie. I have needed the dowry badly because at that time I wanted to*

*exchange some goats by cattle. Thanks to God, here after I can do what I want to do; my daughter is her husband's concern I do not worry about her anymore.*

(Participant Twelve, Sunday 10 April, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

Consequently, the risk of HIV/AIDS and STDs claimed by the research participants in the first category elaborated this situation in terms of the society's believe in the culture of polygamous marriage. According to the response obtained from the key informants, this traditional practice made early married women to live in a risky situation. Moreover, the response of the key informants further showed that, traditionally parents of early married women and they themselves have positive regard for the practice of polygamous marriage where an old man marries a young children in a perception that he has excess cattle to pay in place. Regarding this, the key informants assured that the high potential vulnerability of young girls to HIV/AIDS and STDs is also resulted because they marry their old husbands as at least the second or third wives in the study area. In line with this idea, the researcher gathered some hints about the issue of HIV/AIDS and STDs out of the discussion held in the two FGD participants in that: the people have already developed extremely high regard for marriage in general and polygamous marriages in particular for extensive reasons of economic demand emotional reasons. In doing so, the research explored that parent's primary target is getting a dowry it also revealed that the low level of education as a fundamental contributing factor for the high risk of HIV/AIDS and STDs in the study area. In this regard, the study explored that due to lack of the educational facilities, low societal awareness towards education and customary living style of the study area, early married women and the people of Nyagatom community in general are made to suffering from the resultant effects of practicing early marriage

### **Economic Consequences of Early Marriage in Nyagatom Community**

Regarding early marriage alliance and its overall adverse effect on the economic and demographic structure, the current study explored that the conclusion of early marriage has resulted in worsening the economic wellbeing of early married women in Nyagatom community. In order to explore this, the response of research participants of this category is presented in two main categories and other sub categories. The respondents of the first category stated that there are two relevant concerns; Firstly, they stated the existence of excess number of children per family. Secondly, they asserted that passive economic enrolment of women as major economic consequences of early marriage. On the other hand, research participants in the second category argued that unfair property ownership of early married women is the major economic consequence of early marriage.

#### **Excess Number of Children in the Family**

Concerning the situation of excess number of children in the family, respondents of the first category identified that the three relevant points concerned with the existence of large number of children in families of early married women. They stated that age at first marriage, traditional preference for daughters and low level of understanding about family planning as important grounds. Concerning age at first marriage, the respondents in the first category stated that the high potential of young girls to bear more children is strongly linked to the tradition of early marriage. They stated that, this in turn creates higher possibility of bearing more children in their life. In this case, the participants uncovered that mostly early married women are pushed by their parents to marry very earlier.

Secondly, the research participants stated that the traditional belief of higher preference for daughters as cause in that the husbands/wives the economic demands given for girls in the community lead to high potential of early married women's high in their young age. In relation

to this, the key informants stated that husbands preferred daughters than boys because daughters have higher economic reward (bring huge dowry for their parents when they grown up and marry a rich man). Thirdly, the respondents stated that the low level of understanding about family planning and using of it as another reason; they stated that this situation in turn contributes for the existence of excess number of children in the family. According to the respondents, this is caused because of low level of education held by both early married women and their parent was stated as a case. Confirming this reality, one of my interviewees stated that:

*I and my husband have no interest to use family planning services. I believe children are gifts of God so; I do not want to kill my offspring using medicines. Moreover, we need children because we want to enrich our community in terms of security and resource with large number of population. Even I do not know how it works; it is also the same to my husband he does not know it too. Actually some medical officers teach us about family planning but I do not apply it. Even if I say I do want to use it, my husband forces me to avoid it. (Participant One, Friday 01 May, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).*

### **Passive Economic Enrollment**

The research participants in the second category stated that passive economic enrollment of women is one of the economic consequences of early marriage in the study area.

The respondents stated that due to EM, early married women denied easy access to engage in various economic activities. For this, they stated two relevant practical points. Firstly, they stated that women are extremely burdened by household activities; in that they stated engagements in the inside and outside home burdens as reasons. Secondly, the respondents of this category stated that husband's economic dominance in the household expenses made them economically dependent and passive in economic concerns.

Concerning the extreme high domestic burdens that early married women shoulder, the research participants stated that the arrangement of early marriage in this community made early married women to be more confined to their domestic chaos than involving themselves in different income generating activities. Evidencing this reality, one of the responses of the research participants showed that:

*let alone the involvement of women in creating other income generation in Nyagatom community, early married children do not have even time to sleep normally. The respondents further stated that early married women are extremely tied with house hold activities and they are highly pressurized by their husbands in their family.*

(Participant Four, 3 May Sunday, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda)

In terms of husband's economic dominance in the house hold expenses, the respondents stated that early married women have no economic contribution in the house hold expenses. According to their response, because of the arrangement of practicing early marriage in the study area, child wives are being devoid of better options to engage themselves and change their life.

Regarding this one of the key in formants revealed that:

*in addition to these effects, early married women have no other economic options set by the government, they are perceived as weaker than men and they could not be able to contribute as men does.*(Participant April, 2015Nyagatom Woreda).

It was also observed that the weather condition by itself creates another problem on the people of Nyagatom in relation to engage them in other economic activities than pastoralism.

Sensing this practical reality, one of the interviewee confirmed that:

*It is my husband who administers my children and me. I do not have any income to earn by myself outside my family. My job is confined only to the house hold activities even if I*

*could; I have no access to engage myself in other economic activities. As you see we have just cattle and this dry weather; therefore, rearing cattle is the job of my husband while caring and curing the cattle and my children is mine, I have no option out of my children/family and cattle which makes me busy in my life* (Participant Three, Friday 01 May, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

### **Unfair Property Ownership**

Contrary to the response of the first category, respondents in the second category argued that unfair property ownership by men is the major economic consequences of arranging early marriage in Nyagatom community. The respondents of this category were asked how early marriage impacted property ownership right of women. In relation to this, they stated that there are three important socio economic contexts in this regard. Hence, they stated that the cultures of wife inheritance, polygamy and absolute resource control by men as major contributing factors for the unfair property ownership or/ issues of resource controlling. Concerning the culture of wife inheritance, the research participants of this category stated that the culture of wife inheritance is practiced by because, they believe that it reduces the probability of resources consumption by the girl's family (If a husband dies) in the family.

In this case, it is done when a wife dies, his parents bring another person as husband (usually brothers are preferred) for his wife. In addition to this, the respondents of the first category added that due to the fact that early marriages are arranged in a big age gap, husbands have high probability to die earlier than the child wife. And the respondents stated that in the course of inheriting wife, a woman is usually deprived of property inheritance right as the newlywed husband is brought as protector of his family's resource. Confirming this fact one of my interviewees stated:

*I have been working here for two years as first instance court judge. When I see the culture of wife inheritance, it is becoming a problem to interpret the law, according to the constitution. You know why, if you decide on cases that demand a divorce; and a woman was living with her newlywed husband you are responsible to judge according to the law and share the resource accordingly. However, in most case this kind of court's decision is causing social problems and make early married woman to lose her property right. For example, killing of the husband's family by the wife's bothers causes conflicts between members of both ethnic groups and are practiced as revenge.*

(Participant Four, Wednesday 6 April, 2015, Nyagatom Woreda).

Regarding the culture of polygamy and the tradition of absolute resource control seized by men, the respondents of the second category on their part argued over two relevant aspects. Firstly, they stated that the culture of polygamy allows a man to marry more wives simultaneously as far as he has the ability to manage all of them. However, according to the respondents of this category, this in turn creates unhealthy resource competition among his wives. They also alleged that traditionally the senior wife has extreme power in economic aspects over the newlywed (especially if the newlywed wife is very young enough to be called as 'wife'). Secondly, the respondents in the second category stated that traditionally peoples have a perception of giving absolute power of resource controlling for men. In this case the respondents stated that in a belief that he paid huge dowry for parents of his wife. They also added that for the unfair resource ownership for women in their family, husband's economic dominance is another cause. The response of the FGD participants entrenched that early married women have no right to claim wealth due to the culture of polygamous marriage where their husband gave huge dowry for their parents in place.

According to the assessment made over the holistic presentation of data in this section, economic concerns that are desired by parents of early married women resulted in the poor living conditions and violation of their rights (to produce property and enjoy with it). It was also explored that almost all of their social and economic rights in the study area are affected.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendation and Social Work Implication

#### 5.1 Discussion

The cause, current situation and the socio-economic consequences of early marriage in Nyagatom Community were thoroughly explored. The study has discovered varieties of issues pertaining to the issue under investigation. Nevertheless, since the study is qualitative research, the degree to which the study's interpretability was confined to the participants of Nyagatom community. In spite of this, the study in this section has depicted the current situation, major cases and socio-economic consequences of early marriage from each segment of the issues under investigation. And thus, reflective to the overall current situation of early marriage in the study area, its major cause and socio-economic consequences referenced to the related literatures, the current study could give indicative overviews about the practice of early marriage on early married young children in the context of Nyagatom woreda as a whole.

To begin with the current situation of early marriage in the study area, it is revealed that including early marriage, the people of Nyagatom community have been practicing traditional marriages in the forms of polygamous marriages, *Telefa* or marriage by *abduction and* marriage by wife inheritance. Furthermore, *Semanya* or civil marriage is also found common form of marriage by other dwellers in the community. In this regard, it is also acknowledged that excluding *Semaniya* or civil marriages, these traditional marriages are practiced for deep-rooted reasons of economic motives and lack of other economic opportunities in the area. In line with the finding of this study, previous findings more or less confirmed this reality; for example, it is stated that including early marriage traditional marriages like polygamy, wife inheritance and abduction are common forms of traditional marriages in almost all pastoralist communities of

south omo zones (EPaRDA, 2011). On the other hand, although it did not document what causes early marriage, the finding by ATEM (2011); shows that the arrangement of early marriage is one of the worst harmful traditional forms of marriage where young girls become enforced to marry adult men. In this regard, this study reaffirmed the same finding and explored that due to the low level of education and absence of alternative economic activities; the people's ability to consider its negative impacts over early married women's holistic situation is still found at low level. Since this being the case, the existing experience of concluding early marriage is explored by recognizing its socio economic causes and consequences over early married women and children as follows.

So, concerning the social causes, the study revealed that polygamous marriage is the most significant social driven reasons of early marriage. It is because polygamy is followed by strong economic demands by parents of early married girls where they need to see economic improvement in their living. Moreover, polygamy is significantly identified as strategy of building a family and resource control. Contrary to the current study, the work of (Pass finder, 2014 and UN, 2011); stated the northern experience in that in most cases, men are engaged in polygamous marriages from the socio-cultural intention where by a husband marries many young wives for showing their economic power, desire to get more boys and establish family prestige in the society than economic gains. However, is acknowledged that the people's way of life here in Nyagatom is different from other areas in the country; they are highly pushed by environmental problems and this in turn lead them to look for other economic options and to get this, young girls become the only option to change this situation.

*Telefa* or/marriage by abduction is another cause for EM in Nyagatom community. The study reflected that abduction causes socio economic crises, since it is followed by debt for the

dowry given to the wives family. In this regard, the study explored that abduction is usually applied when a man fails to pay the excessive bride's price asked by the girl's family and often committed while a girl is on her way to fetch water and collect fire wood. In line with this finding, the study by (MRGI, 2008 and UN, 2005) stated that abduction is usually followed by early marriage in rural areas where a man abducts a girl without her intention as many rural little girls go far to fetch water, collect fire wood etc and for this, men are not regarded as rapist.

Contrary to the findings of MRGI, (2008) which documented that abduction is happened over young girls for reasons of fear of rejection/refusal by the girl's family due to status considerations based on ethnicity and religion. However, the current study revealed that abduction is practiced for high economic concerns and considered as theft against the girl's family than attached to the question of status based on ethnicity or religion. Moreover, it is revealed that girls are not easily married in the study area because they are not just girls for their parents but they are precious assets of their parents too.

Conflict is explored as social reason for the arrangement of early marriage. Because of disagreement on grazing land, robbery or/raiding of cattle, failure to pay bride's price or/dowry, ease access to fire arms, closeness of the area to borders and lack of awareness about conflict; early married women become victimized. In this context the study confirmed that when conflicts occur, girls become presented as peace conciliations where parents bring their daughters for the sake of excuses. Thus, the finding of this study reaffirmed previous finding by (EPaRDA, 2011) which stated that raiding of cattle, ease access to fire arms, closeness of the area to borders and lack of organized police create conflicts. Thus, it is reflected that to settle these disagreements young girls are enforced to marry at their early ages as peace negotiation.

The study further depicted that the low level of education, the poor educational facilities, the warm weather and the mobile nature of the people have created grounds for early marriage. In this regard, due to the fear that parents develop as they think education makes girls to disobey their husbands is also explored as reason for concluding early marriage. Therefore, in those situations parents of early married women arrange early marriages as they develop poor knowledge about it. Cognizant to this finding, a study by (Bell, 2013) showed that lack of education opportunities is one of the factors for child marriage; young girls in traditional societies have no equal access to education; this in turn creates poor awareness towards the values of education and information about the evil effects of early marriage. Consequently, these social reasons of early marriages are found contributing a lot for economic driven conclusion of forced marriages in the study area.

Accordingly, the examination made towards the major economic reasons of early marriage in the study area has revealed that desire to get excessive dowry and poverty are the most fundamental economic reasons of arranging of early marriage. It reflected that the culture of exchanging young women for high dowry is the most fundamental economic reason. It is observed that parents claim a significant amount of dowry in the form of bride's payment. For example, this study has identified that parents ask more than 120 cattle, countless sheep and goats and 10-20 'safety machines' (fire guns) per girl. However, as compared to previous experiences, due to its expensiveness, presenting fire gun as a dowry is currently on its downward trajectory.

The study further identified that beyond its cultural significance, a dowry is asked for deeply rooted reasons of lack of access to other economic options and for reasons of cultural retribution (as revenge to get back what parents/fathers lost for their marriage). In this regard,

this finding is shared by other researchers; for example, the finding of Dagne (1994) stated that in order not to lose the huge dowry, parents enforce their children to marry earlier and forcefully arrange early marriages. It is also confirmed that the strong economic interest of parents is followed by strong desire to accumulate extra wealth. In this regard, as compared to other regions on the same concern, the study explored that the culture of claiming dowry is extremely economic where girls are seen as best escaping strategy to get rid of poor economic situations.

This finding is also shared by other findings of (Pass finder International/Ethiopia, 2010; Dessalegn, 1999; EPaRDA, 2011); which says young girls are becoming a means of survival options for their parents thus with the cost of their little girl, parents create wealth and change their lives. Thus, due to these economic reasons many girls are being commercialized, this in turn lead to the enforcement of young girls marry at an early age.

Evidencing the above mentioned socio economic foundations of early marriage; the study has investigated the most significant socioeconomic consequences of early marriage in Nyagatom Community. Consequently, extreme workloads inside and outside home, domestic violence, operation or wife's rejections, high risk of HIV/STDs and extermination of education are social consequences. The existence of excess number of children in the family, passive economic enrolment of women and unfair property inheritance are revealed fundamental economic consequences of early marriage. For example, in terms of domestic workloads, the study explored that early married women are being fed up of everyday activities like grinding of mill, counting of cattle, rearing children, preparation and/or provision of food for their husbands as (inside home work load); In this context, this study reconfirmed previous studies conducted by Dereje,(1999); MRGI, (2008); Dagne, (1994) as they stated that when women marry at an early age they face challenges concerning young wives' domestic responsibilities of taking care of

their children. Due to early marriage, young girls of the study area are also found overburdened and not helped by their husbands.

Contrary to the finding by (MRGI, 2008) which stated that in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, there are taboos in place that prohibit men from undertaking some domestic tasks deemed suitable only for women; the study assured that women are overburdened and not helped by their husbands, because of the fact that women are considered as properties of their husbands as they are exchanged for large amount of money.

Although, they are not typical to this community, the study revealed that daily activities like collecting firewood and fetching water are explored as daily routines of outside home burdens; but what makes these situations worse in this study is that the young children are doing these tasks in a very harsh (hot) weather condition and it is also found that they have no exposure to get help from their husbands. For example, the realities about the state of early married women are examined in that they walk distant places on barefoot holding their babies to execute the matrimonial responsibilities but no one cares for their labor exploitation in the community. Regarding this, the finding of (UN, 2005; UNICEF, 2000) confirmed the same finding, in that they stated that most children both in rural and urban areas of developing countries do not consider labor exploitation and usually tell and report when they face labor exploitations and other violations.

Moreover, it is reflected that these effects of early marriage are found violating children's right of the Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC], 1989) under article 16 (1), p.41) stipulates that:

“No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honor and reputation.”

Beside above mentioned impacts, frequent domestic violence is also another form of social consequence of early marriage. For instance, physical harassments such as frequent beating by husbands, abduction, sexual harassment/forceful sexual intercourse, dominance or disrespect (insults) by husbands or wife's rejections are worth mentioning among others. In this regard, frequent domestic violations are significantly committed because of deep economic questions. This is because; as husbands get their wives in exchange for large amount of cattle, goats and sheep thus; husbands know that they have given full power to govern their wives in any ways. For example, due to the fact that husbands give huge dowry (as bride price usually paid in many years); a husband does not tolerate his wife in any way and treats her charmingly.

On the other hand, as little girls are too young to produce income, the study reflected that early married women's economic contribution in their family is remained low. This in turn causes another factor for wife's rejections and domestic operations by their husbands in their family. The study conducted by (EPaRDA, 2011; Dessalegn, 1999) shares the same finding.

It is also examined that because of their strong alignment to domestic affairs, early married women are also extremely dependent over their husband's resource thus; they are extremely dominated and oppressed by their husbands too. The finding of Dagne (1994) revealed the same finding, in that due to the low economic contribution of young girls, early married women are not able to create other supportive economic options in their family and their community.

In line with the findings of this study, other studies for example (UNFPA, 2005; Tabeyin,1993; WHO, 2014; Abdullah, 2011; Dagne,1994 and UNICEF, 2000) have found that in traditional societies, the conclusion of early marriage impacts the lives of young girls in terms of diminishing their physical, social and economic well beings. In addition to this, (UNICEF, 2000;

Clark, 2004; MRGI, 2008) shared the same finding with the current study as they asserted that the state of exposure to domestic and sexual violence of girls who are married earlier are more likely to be abused sexually, physically, socially, economically and emotionally than women married lately.

Contrary to some elements of the findings of (Dagne, 1994; UNICEF, 1996) this study disproved their finding in which they stated that; due to men's domestic exploitation and domination after unwanted early marriages, many early married women are more likely to get divorced, feel loneliness and abandoned at their early age; However, this study revealed that whatever a husband takes bad actions over his wife, girls of Nyagatom community do not think of divorce, prostitution and migration as escaping strategy out of discomfoting marriage alliance. This is because of the fact that the people consider marriage as the major escaping strategy out of discomfoting economic situation of the area. Therefore, why girls suffer from this situation is because of the fact that majority of the parents have exchange their daughters for the sake of changing their life through forceful marriages. The study further disproved the finding of (Dana and Larsen, 1997) where they stated that migration is caused when either of the spouses married at their early age are interested in other person as they grew older.

Exploring extermination of education as one of the social consequences of early marriage, it is found that although 13 schools (one high school, five secondary and seven elementary schools) are opened in the area, girl's enrollment and parental attitude towards girl's education is low. The analysis made to this aspect revealed that, girl's extermination of education at the outset is caused by parent's economic interest since it is followed by the arrangement of unwanted marriages for their girls to anyone who is economically firmed in the community.

Thus, in order to change their living condition, parents enforce their young girls to get married at their early age than sending them to schools.

The study in this regard it is reflected that the economic gain of marriage is incompatible to investment on their daughter mind. It also reapproved the findings of (Bell, 2013; Pass Finder International, 2009; Brawn, 2012; Abdullah, 2011) in that they stated many parents of the rural community still believe that investment in girl's education as wastage.

In this regard, though it is observed that the government is working on accessing and improving education (by accessing mobile schools), the girl's participation in education is remained low. This is assured by parents strongly believe in 'selling' their children with excess dowry. Moreover, though it is in its down ward trajectory, these situations are found contributing their shares for women's low level of understanding about family planning, HIV/AIDS and STDs diseases. As they are not sent to schools girls could not get rich information about these concerns. This finding is also shared by the finding of MWOYCA (2015) which stated that around 98% of rural mothers and women do not have clear information about family planning and other health related issues.

Concerning maternal health problems such as complications related to pregnancy, delivery, maternal and infant mortality and the issues of fistula; the finding of the UNICEF (2007) revealed that a girl under the age of 15 is five times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than a woman in her 20s. However, this study has reflected different result in that due to the feeding habit of the majority of the community (the majority of them eat meat and foods like slices prepared form maize and sorghum and drink milk as their daily food staff); women and children do not die due to pregnancy related health complications and fistula since these foods made them strong. Similarly, the work of Tabeyin (1993) is also disproved in that

due to traditional practices like early marriage and abduction, around 84% of fistula patients at Addis Ababa fistula hospital contracted obstetric and vasco-vaginal fistulae and other infectious diseases.

## 5.2 Conclusions

This study has examined the causes, current situation and socio-economic consequences of early marriage in Nyagatom community. Specifically, it initially examined the fundamental causes, then it looked in to the current situation of early marriage and finally it explored the socio-economic consequences of early marriage. In this regard, the study revealed that it is difficult to conclude the exact socio-economic effects of early marriage exactly as social or economic; however, the current situation, major causes and socio-economic effects of early marriage in the study area is explored. Nonetheless, with a specific reference to this section, three major points are concluded about all the issue of early marriage in the study area.

Firstly, the current situation of early marriage was assessed and in that many of the people of Nyagatom community have low level of awareness about the harmful effects of early marriage practices. Currently, it is found that they mostly practice an intermediate form of early marriage. The study revealed that the community assembles forceful marriages because of exclusive economic motive of getting a dowry. It is also observed that early marriage for parents is seen as means of wealth accumulation.

In spite of this, the study examined that early marriage is also practiced for reasons of different cultures. In this regard, the current situation of abut traditional marriages in the study area is generally defined in its extremely twined nature to the socio-economic life of the people of Nyagatom community. Though some parents of early married women improved their life, due to the culture of early marriage, young girls are being victimized by the negative effects for many years. Hence, it is observed that the effects of traditional early marriages and early marriage in particular still demand further studies in the community. Generally, the culture of

early marriage for Nyagatom community is more than just a culture but it is their social, cultural and economic destination too.

Secondly, the study has revealed that the particular socio-economic reasons for early marriage. In this regard, it is concluded that early married young children are being exchanged for fundamental economic interests of their parents (of getting large number of cattle, goats, sheep and safety machines), accumulate extra wealth and to escape from poor economic situations. It is also examined that a dowry is highly deserved by both the poor and rich parents of early married women. In turn it resulted in worsening the holistic situation of early married child wives in the study area. Next to these unlimited economic interests, early and forceful marriages are also set for socio-cultural reasons which are followed by economic pretexts. Beside these, frequent conflict is also another rational which made young girls to be seen as means for safety of their parent's life; however, this in turn violates their freedom to choose the right to live whom they love at the right time. Illiteracy and the need to get social protection are also explored as social reasons too.

At the end, the study explored the vital socio-economic consequences of early marriage over early married children in the study area. In this regard, because of the people's strong socio-economic tie with the culture of early marriage, child wives are being exposed for frequent domestic violence and sexual aggressions as they are exchanged for huge dowries for parents. Extreme inside and outside home work loads, continuous school dropouts and high potential of the risk of HIV/AIDS and STDs are also confirmed as social consequences of early marriage. However, issues related to prostitution, fistula, divorce and migration are investigated as not the consequences of early marriage in nyagatom community. Economically, the practice of early marriage is contributed to economic discomforts in the families of child wives. Hence, excess

numbers of children per family, unfair property inheritance (ownership) and passive economic enrolment of early married children are explored as hurtful economic effects.

In general the current study has examined diversified contexts of early marriage in Nyagatom community where young girls of the area have been suffering from early marriage and it can be concluded that economically next to their cattle; parents of Nyagatom community are extremely dependent up on their daughters as survival options.

### **5.3 Recommendation**

As a result of this study the following recommendations are forwarded over the causes, current situation and the socio-economic consequences of the issue of early marriage in Nyagatom community. Firstly, in order to change the current situation of the practice of early marriage, collective community action is strongly required as it minimizes the prevalence of this hurtful traditional practice. In this regard, increasing the community's awareness about the evil effects of practicing early marriage over children is necessary. Therefore, it should start from maximizing parents' attitude in invalidating the arrangement of traditional forceful marriages at home. Because, parents are the primary enforcers of their little girls to get early married, to be socially and economically dominated by old husbands, to be exposed for difficult domestic chores, drop their education and lose their human rights in the community. Thus, awareness creation is significantly recommended for the minimization of these effects of it. Furthermore, it is best to take part awareness creation by the community elders and the community members by themselves. In addition to this, more attention has to be given while organizing training programs and strategies of activities in the community; because the issue of marriage is very sensitive social concern of the nyagatom community. It could be better to do it through traditional ceremonies (public holidays, plays and other sets) public places. I recommend this because; the community is sensitive to marital aspects since marriage is witnessed by themselves as their socio-cultural and economic destinations.

Secondly, although the area is naturally poor endowed and the community lacks other economic options, the government has to create other alternative economic options. Creating these alternatives could essentially minimize the prevalence of early marriage in the area, because due to lack of other economic options many of the parent's decision to arrange forceful

marriage is highly linked to their absolute desire to get huge dowry as an option. The creation of newly established economic options could divert parent's attention to look for other economic options and this in turn could help girls to maintain their safe childhood.

Moreover, it could be more effective solution for the government both in terms of engaging people in alternative production and avoiding hurtful traditional practice by enhancing community's holistic wellbeing in the study area. Hence, these all could be done by creating other economic cooperatives, introducing new subordinate livelihood strategies, accessing long term loans (e.g. omo microfinance) and creating business networks outside of the area. Finally, the administrative solution has to be set. This is recommended because for example child wives of the area are suffering from heavy domestic tasks, go far to get water and firewood thus, facilities like establishing grinding machines and water pumps close to the community could reduce the intensity of child wives' domestic chores in their family. Besides, organizing police force for more security of the community is also suggested. The areas closure to borders has created favorable ground for free ethnic conflicts and raiding of cattle which usually causes arrangement of young girl's early marriage as peace conciliation.

Another important recommendation concerning security is given for early married girl's protection; in this regard, husband's frequent domestication oppression and other violence over young girls in the community could be reduced. Last but not least, maximizing the existing involvement of lowers (the teams of awareness creation about law and order), schools, community groups, health centers and locally working NGOs is also equally relevant and recommended too. Generally, these recommendations are subjected to immediate the minimization of the current situation of the problem and for the gradual eradication of the socio-

economic effects of early marriage over children and cure other associated problems due to practicing hurtful traditional practices in the study area.

#### **5.4 Implication for Social Work**

The analysis made into the causes, current situation and the socio-economic experiences of early married children due to the harmful tradition practice of early marriage in Nyagatom community explored a variety of issues to consider. Since, the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs of people who are vulnerable, disenfranchised, oppressed, neglected and living in poverty the following implication is set. Thus, the mission of social work is rooted in a set of core values such as social justice, dignity, and worth of the person importance of human relationships, integrity and competence (NASW, 1999). The following four points are communicated for the social work implications of the study into the causes, current situation and the socioeconomic consequences of early marriage over children as Policy, Research, Service and Education.

Firstly, an investigation into the existing policy of women's, children and youth affairs of Ethiopia reveals that all women and children have given equal political, social and economic opportunities to participate and being protected everywhere in the country. This policy states that strategies shall be employed to facilitate the reliability of these entitlements especially for rural women and girls who are in difficult situations. In this regard, the government must specifically design improved and easily applicable mechanisms, strategies that would allow early married children and women to be effectively protected from their husband's domestic operations and their family's repressive treatments in the community.

In this regard, this study gives stress for proper implementation and follows ups of policies concerning rural women's and children affairs. Secondly, as it was discussed, until this research was carried out, no research was dedicated to the specific (same topic) at hand has been carried out in the study area. With the particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable to harmful traditional practices, the emphasis on the multidimensional

impacts of early marriage on young girls was very insignificant or absent among researchers. Accordingly, this research has come up with specific study over a topic looked in to the socio economic consequences of early marriage in the profession of social work. It is, therefore, to urge fellow social workers to carryout studies regarding the specific elements of the social and economic consequences of early marriage in other parts of the southern people's socioeconomic and cultural settings; since it is not considered as social problem in most parts of the south.

Thirdly, as far as its implication for service of social work is concerned, two points were made. First, social workers could provide training for parents and their children in the community about the evil effects of practicing early marriage, creating other economic options (training the community how to apply the model of Asset Based Community Development Approaches) than enforcing children to get married at their early age as escaping strategies. This in turn could help the victims to lessen the challenges of this tradition. Secondly, social workers and concerned bodies should provide the necessary therapeutic and professional service to early married women who have victimized by this harmful practice.

Finally, in so far as its implication for social work education is concerned, the present study made a typical contribution in the topic of early marriage and its socio-economic consequences in the southern pastoralist community's context of the country. This could be seen, for instance, from the way the study specifically demonstrated how one of the major tools of social work knowledge base, the perspective of person-in-environment (PIE), is practically applied in our context to deal with the various situations of rural women. Similarly, the study examined how the theory of social feminist approach is contextualized over rural early married young children who are living in different familial and societal operations in our country's context. After all, it is also necessary to consider the impacts of harmful traditional practices over

social justice. In this regard, a collective report by (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, (1999) on women's health reflect that, the level of social justice and the degree of respect for women's rights in a society are complimentary. Women's right to receive quality social services is guaranteed when their basic human rights to education, nutrition, to a safe environment, to economic resources and to participation in decision making are well addressed.

