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College of Education and Behavioral Studies

Center of Early Childhood Care and Education

Early Childhood Care Practices and Values

of

Families of North Shewa, Amhara Cultural Background

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Early Childhood Care and Education

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Thesis Approval

This is to certify the thesis prepared by Hiwot Mekonnen entitled, “ Early Childhood Care Values and Practices of Families of North Shewa, Amhara Cultural Background” submitted to the Center of Early Childhood Care and Education in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of master of arts in early childhood care and education is complied with the regulations of the Addis Ababa University.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my work and that all the sources that I used for its development have been duly listed in the reference section.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to describe, analyze, and understand the early childhood care practices and values of families with North Shewa Amhara cultural background. The study has taken a qualitative method of inquiry, which allowed the investigation of the phenomenon more deeply by observing the life of three families living in North Shewa Zone Metikoria village, Goshebado village, and Debirebirhan city. The study's design is Ethnography because ethnography as a research design is highly suitable to study the culture and practices of a group of people in their natural setting. In this research, it was critical to employ ethnography in order to closely explore the different care practices that families, especially mothers, implement to support the development of their children and to examine the meanings and values underlying the care practices to support the development of their children., And to examine how these practices are influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors. The parents, grandparents, parents, siblings, and the children themselves from the three households served as the main sources of data. A detailed examination of the families' actual lives was documented. Due to their knowledge and experience with indigenous health care and their close association with the families, practitioners of traditional medicine were also discussed. 20 interviews with 5 parents, 5 children, 3 older siblings, 4 grandparents (community elders), and 3 indigenous medicine practitioners. and various field notes were collected in a period of six months' time. The analysis of the study is presented thematically based on two global themes that respond to the two research questions. The different practices related to health, nutrition, safety, cleanliness, learning, and stimulation of young children are presented in detail and their values are unpacked. The study encourages applying culturally responsive and appropriate approaches to early childhood care that respect and value the uniqueness of the communities children come

from. Likewise, it highlights that childhood programs can benefit greatly from the rich indigenous values and practices documented in this study. The findings also indicate the importance of producing more research on the subject because there is a lot of learning and insight that could be generated from the various cultures in Ethiopia.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Kerry (2011), the early years of life have been established to be very important not only because children in their early years are pretty vulnerable but also because what happens during these early periods of life has significant effects on later life. The general interests in early childhood practices reflect specific cultural attitudes towards early childhood and children. According to Harkness et al. (2001), parental cultural belief systems or ethnotheories are the “nexus through which elements of the larger culture are filtered” and are the source of organization of daily life and parental practices (Harkness et al., 2001, p. 9). Studies have examined the role of culture in the construction of parental thinking about children’s development. According to Goodnow & Collins, (1990), parental ethnotheories are shared child-rearing beliefs, values, and practices, constructed within broader cultural belief systems. Parents’ ethnotheories about child development have cognitive and motivational properties and provide a frame of reference for interpreting and responding to child behavior (Harkness & Super, 1995). Moreover, a growing body of empirical studies has demonstrated that parents’ beliefs about child behavior and development have important direct and indirect influences on children’s cognitive, emotional, and social competence (Sigel & Mc Gillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002).

Studies carried out in several cultural contexts have demonstrated how parental ethnotheories influence caregiving practices Harkness & Super (1992). According to Harkness et al (1981), a study conducted in Kipsigis community of Kokwet in Kenya has demonstrated that parents frequently choose community caregiving, in which members of the extended family take on

major childcare responsibilities. This contrasts individualistic societies, where autonomy and independence are typically valued more highly in nuclear families.

According to Lin X., & Yang W. (2019), in East Asian nations like China, the formation of harmony, obedience, and submission to authority is highly valued according to parental ethno theories. These ideal hierarchical relationships in the family are of a Confucian origin and influence the style of parenting.

However, these studies conducted in indigenous communities such as Native American and Canadian by Charissa and Valery (2008) indicate that parental ethnotheories involve a holistic approach to child rearing that incorporates spirituality, cultural traditions, and land connection. These include information transfer across generations and cultural identity preservation.

Very little research has been done on early childhood care culture in Ethiopia. However some notable exceptions are Dame's (2014) work on parenting styles attitudes and beliefs among Arsi Oromo communities and Tadesse's ethnography of Guji people's cultural settings for childcare, play, and education (2019).

These studies illuminate the significance of communal caregiving and the pivotal role of extended family networks in nurturing children. Moreover, they underscore how cultural tenets like collectivism, reverence for elders, and the pursuit of social harmony shape parenting approaches throughout Ethiopian societies, influencing decisions regarding discipline, education, and gender roles within familial structures. Nonetheless, a more comprehensive exploration of ethnotheories spanning various regions and ethnic groups within Ethiopia is needed.

Parental ethnotheories influence early childhood care practices and beliefs across cultural boundaries. To create culturally aware interventions and programs that promote healthy child development, it is imperative to comprehend these ethnotheories.

It's crucial to understand that parental ethnotheories are dynamic and subject to change as a result of shifting social, cultural, and economic conditions. Therefore, ongoing research is needed to further explore the complexities of parental ethnotheories and their implications for early childhood development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Parents Practice and values towards child care has direct and indirect impact on children's cognitive, emotional, and social competence (Sigel & Mc Gillicuddy, 2002). And this ethnotheories are according to Goodnow & Collins, (1990), shared child-rearing beliefs, values, and practices, constructed within broader cultural belief systems. However, despite its tremendous impact on children's development and outcome, there is a distinct shortage of research on this important topic in Ethiopian families. (Tadesse, 2019), (Belay and Belay, 2016), (Dame, 2014). The majority of existing early childhood academic work concentrates on institutionalized early childhood programs and centres, ignoring the complex family dynamics, rich traditions, and firmly held beliefs of various cultural communities. Hence, the lack of attention regarding local and cultural practices of early childhood care hampers the development of context based interventions and programs for young children. As a result, there is a big chance that the inefficient and culturally insensitive approaches and strategies of our early childhood programs and interventions are a result of this. This gap is the main reason why we need to devote thoroughly to investigate the various cultural early childhood and care practices that are available in different ethnic groups in the country. This will shed light in the various nuances and will allow us to address the particular challenges inherent in different cultural contexts. This study attempts to address this gap by focusing on the experiences of families of North Shewa Cultural Background.

The study aims to examine the complex responsibilities that family members play in providing care and analyzing the belief system shaping their decisions and actions. As a result, by focusing on the Earlychildhood care Practices and Values of Families with North Shewa Background, this research specifically aims to identify and describe the health, hygiene, nutrition, safety as well as learning and stimulation practices of families with North Shewa Amhara cultural background. The study also intends to investigate the values behind these practices. This research will be instrumental in building context based programs that aim to promote healthy early childhood development outcomes in the country by providing insights into the distinctive cultural setting of North Shewa Amhara.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question that should be answered in this study is; 'what are the early childhood care practices and values of North Shewa Amhara?' The following fundamental research questions are formulated in order to attain the research objective;

- 1) How is childhood the health and wellbeing, hygiene and cleanliness, nutrition and food, safety and accident prevention as well as learning and stimulation practiced in North Shewa families?
- 2) What are the values behind the care practices?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The general objective of this thesis is to describe, analyze, and understand the early childhood care practices and values of North Shewa Amhara. From this general objective, the study is intended to address the following specific objectives;

- 1) To identify and describe the health and wellbeing, hygiene and cleanliness, nutrition and food, safety and accident prevention as well as learning and stimulation practices of families with North Shewa Amhara cultural background.
- 2) To analyze, and interpret the values behind the early childhood care practices.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Families and parents will be encouraged to protect and celebrate their cultural heritage when they recognize the significance it has on their children's developmental outcomes. Additionally, they will be better armed to support their children's holistic development by choosing caring methods that are consistent with their cultural beliefs. Additionally, emphasizing the value of preserving customs and cultural practices validates the knowledge and experience of carers in families in North Shewa Amhara cultural background, there by promoting a sense of pride and identity.

Community leaders and cultural institutions can refer to the findings of the research to advocate culturally sensitive initiatives, promoting intergenerational knowledge transmission and preserving cultural traditions.

Practitioners can benefit from the insights presented in the research on context based early childhood care practices and values of the families they work with, which will support their effort in creating customized learning environment for each child. They can also refer to the various practices incorporated in the research to enhance engagement and learning outcomes for children from North Shewa Amhara cultural background.

Policy makers can use the research to design policies that are culturally sensitive and programs that are context based. Governmental institutions that work on Health, Education and Social services can get insight to modify their services to better address needs of families.

The research fills the gap in ethnoparental literature across culture, family dynamics and early childhood development in North Shewa context. And Researchers can build upon the methods and findings of the research to conduct further studies and explore additional dimensions of early childhood care practices and values within diverse cultural communities

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Indigenous Early Childhood Care Values: - are the ideologies and beliefs that guide the practices of caring for young children in Indigenous communities. These values are rooted in the cultural, spiritual, linguistic, and historical traditions of each Indigenous group, and reflect their worldview and identity.

Indigenous Early Childhood Care Practices:- are the culturally specific ways of nurturing, educating and protecting young children that are rooted in the values, beliefs and traditions of Indigenous peoples.

1.7 Limitations of the study

With limited time, budget, and access, as well as because of the research design, the research has concentrated on/around observing the life of three families in three locations in North Shewa area and incorporated limited participants.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations are the choices and boundaries the researcher sets for the study, such as the research questions, the objectives, the scope, and the theoretical framework (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). Hence, the research objectives are used to describe, analyze, and interpret Indigenous Early childhood care values and practices of North Shewa Amhara, rather than to test hypotheses or propose solutions. Second, the scope is limited to Indigenous Early childhood care values and practices of North Shewa Amhara rather than covering other Ethnic groups, regions,

or countries. Third, the theoretical framework is based on a post-modernism approach and applies social constructionist methodology and practice and symbolic interactionism theories rather than using mainstream or Western theories or paradigms.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

This section incorporates the various books, journal articles, reports, and online databases that are reviewed by the researcher and found have relevant information and findings related to the topic of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Background of the Study

2.1.1 Social Constructionism

The theoretical framework of this thesis is founded on the notion of social constructionism, which refers to the viewpoint that human existence is the result of social and interpersonal factors. (Gergen, 1985). The postmodern movement can be credited with its roots in this theory, which has also impacted the discipline of cultural studies. According to Alexandra (2014), it has brought the emergence of the cultural shift in cultural studies.

A positivistic philosophical worldview is a system that relies only on the data of experience and rejects any metaphysical or a priori speculations (Nakata, 2007). Historically, this worldview has been applied to the study of Indigenous peoples, leading to research methods that imposed Western frameworks on them and disconnected their knowledge from their histories, worldviews, and cultural and social practices. (Datta, 2018) Such study paradigms, contexts, and procedures disregard how Indigenous realities are socially constructed. (Kukutai & Walter, 2015). The social constructionism movement, however, made a different assumption about how reality is constructed and how knowledge is produced. Three tenets make up the theory. First, it contends that meanings are socially constructed via the coordination of people in their numerous interactions, making them dynamic and ever-changing. (Gergen & Gergen, 2018). In other words, knowledge comes from interactions

between people. Second, language is crucial to how society is built. In other words, language has rules that it adheres to, which affect how we see the outside world. Thirdly, it sees people as essential to developing culture, politics, and history. This indicates that the community's knowledge of particular facts, values, and realities is accepted and upheld by the community.

Social Constructionism, Postmodern Approach to Knowledge

The social constructionism approach sets up a situation for a more enhanced concept of democratization that upholds the importance of utility, participation, and social transformation over an accurate reflection of reality in the evaluation and use of knowledge (Kovach, 2009). The constructionist theory reacts strongly to modifications, resulting in new practices and behaviors. Social constructionism can be a helpful way to confront and accept changes in context during times of fast global change, opening up fresh opportunities for doing research and making interventions. In addition, the constructionist alternative has moral ramifications. It is a way of thinking and doing that moves away from expertise-based, rational, hierarchical, and result-focused models, going toward a more participatory concept. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

2.1.2 The Social Construction of Childhood

Wagg (2005) claims that rather than being a shared experience, childhood is "socially produced." Even though everyone experiences essentially the same stages of physical development, it varies depending on the culture. As a result, the status of children in society is not written in stone; it varies across different eras, regions, and cultural settings. Globalization has, however, disseminated and imposed on the rest of the world the Western idea of childhood as a distinct life period rooted in a nuclear family and school where children are dependent and vulnerable. (Shafer, 1996)

The 'social construction of childhood' notion looks at how various civilizations and cultures define and see children. Studying this subject can improve one's understanding of diversity, social justice, and human development, among other things. One can learn about the elements that influence children's identities, experiences, and chances by looking at how they are viewed and treated in various circumstances. Studying how childhood is socially constructed can also assist one in challenging widely held, sometimes prejudiced or oppressive, ideas about childhood. For instance, some academics have suggested that all cultures do not share the Western idea of childhood as a time of innocence and dependence, which may exclude or marginalize the voices and agency of children. (James and Prout, 1997).

2.1.3 Symbolic Interactionism Theory

According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interaction theory sheds light on the specific nature of the interactions within and between systems. He suggests that human beings subjectively construct the meaning of what they experience and then act based on these meanings. These meanings arise from the interaction of interpretive, reflective processes and linguistic and behavioral interactions with and between others within the diverse systems people live in and constantly interact with. Interpretations and social interactions interact in dialectic, reciprocal, and transactional processes over time. That is, people continuously construct society, and society constructs peoples' perceptions and experiences. Signs and symbols would be interpreted more or less similarly by individuals who share a similar conceptual mental map. People feel they share a common culture and see each other as members of the same group. (Hall, 1997). Thus, the shared conceptual map or mental representation must be

converted into a common language, such as written, spoken, audible, or visual pictures. Signs are the broad medium that makes it easier for words, sounds, and images to correlate.

The theory was used in this research to analyze the values, norms, beliefs and expectations of families of North Shewa, Amhara regarding early childhood care by observing the language, gestures, rituals and other symbols they use in relation to their care for the development of the child.

2.1.4 Practice Theory

According to Shove et al. (2012) practices are constituted by combining (only) three main components: materials (e.g. bodies, things, technologies and tangible physical entities), competences (e.g. skills, know-how, techniques) and meanings (e.g. symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations). It is through recurrent enactments (i.e. practices-as-performances) that a distinct and recognizable conjunction of these elements is established over time, with social practices then becoming visible as entities (practices-as-entities) which are embedded in broader nexuses or bundles of practices. As Shove et al indicate, although working with only three components or elements might be helpful when organizing empirical research on social change, it is at the expense of simplifying what social practices are about. (Shove et al., 2012).

Practice theory is a useful framework for this study, because early childhood care activities and interactions shape and are shaped by social and cultural contexts. Practice theory allows us to assume that these practices are not simply routines or habits, but rather dynamic and situated performances that involve bodily movements, material objects, discourses, emotions, and meanings. It enables us to gain insights into how different actors participate in and negotiate the norms, expectations, and values of early childhood care.

2.1 5 Parental Ethnotheories

According to (Whiting 1976), Culture often serves as a vague yet omnipresent explanation for the residual differences not accounted for by individual factors such as age, gender, social class, and intelligence. These differences are frequently attributed to an undefined entity labelled as "ethnicity x" or "culture y." However, according to him there are cultural dimensions capable of elucidating significant normative traits in the behaviour of both adults and children—traits that are observable, quantifiable, adjustable, and can be synthesized using scientific methods. Whiting advocated for the acquisition of the most reliable cultural transmission data through the employment of diverse methodologies, concentrating on a single area and a select number of hypotheses concurrently. Furthermore, it is imperative for researchers to persist in their quest for the most influential cultural-level independent variables that elucidate parental and child behaviours globally (Weisner, 2001).

Thomas Weisner has advanced this fundamental perspective using the concept of the Ecocultural niche, or activity setting. Cultural learning environments continuously evolve over time to promote adaptation to constraints imposed by external factors, such as changes in the subsistence base, climatic changes, and the political economies of the region, (Gallimore, Goldenberg, & Weisner, 1993). Activity settings are the regular, everyday situations that give children the chance to learn and grow via role-playing and social interactions. They are how institutions and prevailing cultural norms manifest themselves in the lives of children and impact their development. They are the embodiment of the ecological and cultural systems that surround the child and family.

Building on the Whittings' approach, Super and Harkness (1986) defined the term "developmental niche" in terms of three essential traits, emphasising children as a developing

as well as learning organism. 1) The way that daily life is organised, which includes the physical and social environments as well as the routines that a child lives, learns, grows, and develops; 2) The parenting techniques that the child's carers employ, which include the culturally-regulated routines of child care and child training; 3) The cultural belief systems, or parental ethnotheories, that carers hold about children, families, and themselves and apply to their interactions with children.

Cross-cultural studies of functional families, according to Harkness and Super (1995), reveal various cultural routes to effective parenting. Because they think that ethnotheories are the "nexus through which elements of the larger culture are filtered" and the origin of the first two components, daily organisation and parental practices, they concentrate their research on the third component, parental ethnotheories (Harkness et al. 2001, p. 9). In this way, Harkness and Super diverge from the Whittings, who held that values and beliefs—including expressive systems like the arts and beliefs from parents—come from the material circumstances and aspects of daily existence, not the other way around (Whiting, 1980). However, 'socialisation and development are not fixed but rather adapt, in a coordinated way, to changing ecological conditions," as stated by Greenfield, Maynard, and Childs (2003, p. 455).

Parental ethnotheories are cultural models that parents hold regarding children, families, and themselves as parents. The term cultural model, drawn from cognitive anthropology, indicates an organized set of ideas that are shared by members of a cultural group (D'Andrade and Strauss, 1992). Like other cultural models related to the self, parental ethnotheories are often implicit, taken-for-granted ideas about the "natural" or "right" way to think or act, and they have strong motivational properties for parents.

2.2. Review of Empirical Studies

2.2.1 The Impact of Culture on Child Care

The concepts "Shared understandings" and "shared expectations" have been used by Sampson (2012) to define "culture." He elaborates that children are influenced by the values, aims, customs, practices, rituals, traditions, and stories that are a part of their cultural communities in how they perceive the world and what is expected of them. Culture frequently manifests itself at a visible or explicit level in expressions and symbols (such as clothing, food, holidays, routines, crafts, and music) in addition to operating at a hidden or implicit level in the values, meanings, and philosophies that underlie a group of people's explicit social practices. (Garcia, 2015).

Local traditions and rituals significantly impact people's attitudes and views. One of the features frequently referred to as identity is cultural background. Therefore, People are a product of their environment, including "values, languages, religions, ideals, artistic expressions, social relationships, thinking patterns, and behaviours" (Vang, 2010). A person's cultural background is the consequence of the cultural expressions they are exposed to throughout their life. Each person has a unique personality, but these personalities do not just happen; they result from the countless millennia of human history that have shaped civilization. Cultural norms are passed down through generations and determine how people behave and think.

'Personal' versus 'social' identity is a different dynamic. Children's subjective perceptions of their individuality, uniqueness, and sense of self are called personal identity. On the other side, social identity refers to how an individual believes they are (or would like to be) similar to others, generally via identifying with family and peer culture (Schafer, 2006). A child's

developing sense of self is influenced by factors like age, gender, religion, ethnicity, interests, role models, and celebrities, as well as by their abilities and pastimes.

According to Warin (2010), one's sense of self is essential to one's general psychological health because it allows one to take charge of one's lives and manage their experiences. Children with a solid sense of who they are more likely succeed academically and socially. Their ties with their family, friends, other adults and kids, and others in their community help them develop a strong sense of self. Children form positive identities through open communication, peer acceptance, supportive interactions and environments, and witnessing the appreciation and value of others who share their qualities and identities.

The absence of recent research and documentation of local childrearing practices, customs, norms, and beliefs is one of the barriers to using indigenous knowledge in early childhood policy-making, programming, and implementation in Africa (Shafer, 2006). And this is one gap this research tries to bridge. The researcher felt it crucial to observe the knowledge in practice within the community to analyze the childrearing practices, rituals, norms, and beliefs of families of North Shewa's cultural background to meet the objective of the research. And used approaches that allow her to revitalize and strengthen indigenous ways of knowing.

The article by Derrick B. in 1972, which is better described as a "position paper" from the middle of the 1960s, is one of the first to highlight important characteristics of the African child. There are only a few studies that have attempted to present childrearing practices in Africa in a more holistic manner since postcolonial times.

Other researchers like Evans J Myers (1994), made studies that emphasize on the significance of Indigenous knowledge. This was further supported by Karin and Margaret

(2003), who pursued a similar contention that Early Childhood Development interventions in Africa are more effective when based on local knowledge. Furthermore, Alan Pence and his colleagues presented the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge into Early Childhood Development courses in post-secondary education in Africa. To this end, as was cited by Sophia (2016), most indigenous research in Africa focuses on showing how early childrearing is organized in African cultures.

Moreover, more researchers like Oburu & Morara (2016) advocate holistic local programs based on African cultures by showing how these programs help children transition to formal education more successfully. In the same manner, researchers like Alicia (2009) offered an analysis of three scenarios that show initiatives and plans that could serve as a springboard for development partners to expand ECCE in Africa further using local knowledge and practice.

More recently, studies that present holistic approaches to theorizing the African child were published by Tatek and Ofori (2016). Insights generated in these studies theorize how children, through their social, economic, cultural, and political engagements, contribute to reconfiguring social and generational dynamics that unfold in Africa. It brings together perspectives that are drawn from 10 articles that report findings from six countries: Zambia, Rwanda, South Africa, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Ghana on different early childhood issues. The gap identified by Shafer (1994) regarding the lack of documentation in African Indigenous childhood knowledge remains a gap that this research attempts to bridge.

In the Ethiopian context, there are few kinds of research that explore the background of ECCE centers and gauge how much indigenous knowledge is incorporated into their offerings. The study by Belay and Belay (2016) examined the regulatory environment and

ECCE frameworks currently in place regarding the indigenization of ECCE services and identified the existing gaps. Their study validated that the lack of indigenization exacerbates the existing access issue. Furthermore, the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) initiatives programs in Addis Ababa was studied by Negussie, Slater, and others (2018). According to the study, using the Amharic alphabet (fidel) was considered strength in using indigenous knowledge in the ECCEs. Both studies used qualitative case studies on selected case ECCEs.

Additionally, Bedassa (2021), in his unpublished paper, conducted a similar exploratory study to evaluate the utilization of local resources as well as explore the perspectives and knowledge of preschool teachers in Horro Guduru Wollega Zone, Oromia by using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The study confirmed a shortage in utilizing local resources and teachers' need to understand the importance of incorporating local resources in classrooms. This research approaches the issue from a different perspective by exploring the missing practices and values in the above research. It documents the cultural practices and values the above researchers sought to incorporate in the ECCEs.

However, some research has been done on indigenous knowledge concerning children's health difficulties. Yilkaal and Yibeltal (2018) conducted one study based on a secondary data review. The study gives a general overview of Ethiopian traditional medicinal herbs used to treat maternal and child health disorders. Tammy (2020) also employed a secondary data analysis to conceptualize the Ethiopian setting for child mental health services in her previous research. It presents the realities of nations like Ethiopia that frequently adhere to traditional and religious views to explain the origin of mental illness and contrasts them with

the ways of Western cultures that typically follow the biomedical model of disease conceptualization and treatment. The study draws broad conclusions about the national framework for mental health. It connects it to children's experiences by emphasizing the significance of understanding the background to increase children's access to mental health care. The other study by Fekensa (2020) evaluated traditional medicine and its contributing factors in the Tole District of South West Oromia. Data collected from parents of children served as the study's foundation. The study reveals that traditional medicine use is widespread and significantly contributes to public health because some people in the area lack access to and cannot afford modern health facilities. This research fills the gap in these researches by actually exploring the practices and values of the community in raising healthy children.

Additional studies have attempted to record indigenous viewpoints and knowledge in particular cultural communities and indigenous systems. Arsi Oromo parents tend to encourage indigenous parenting ideals and beliefs in their parenting practices, according to the study done by Dame, A. (2014). It examined how parenting practices, values, and beliefs relate to one another in the Arsi culture. Similarly, Firdissa Jebessa (2021) investigated early childhood education and the responsibilities of children by portraying their economic, social, cultural, and political roles within the Oromo Gada System and derived its implications on the later experiences of the children. Tadesse JaletaJirata (2019) also conducts a more thorough investigation and documentation of the cultural settings for child care, play, and education among the Guji people of Ethiopia. It examined practices in young children's cultural settings and demonstrated how community-based participatory care and learning are essential to the Guji people's early childhood development heritage. This study adds to the

efforts of the researchers mentioned above that document the unique indigenous knowledge regarding early childhood issues by identifying the practices and value systems of another cultural community in Ethiopia, North Shewa Amhara.

The researcher found only two early childhood studies in North Shewa, Amhara, as a result. The first was made by Mohammed (2018), who conducted a cross-sectional survey centered on a community. It sought to ascertain the prevalence and contributing variables of full postnatal care service utilization in Northern Showa. The study thus showed that the zonal and regional plans needed to be met to provide complete postnatal care services in the study area. A different unpublished paper by Hirut (2022) examined breastfeeding practices and related factors in one particular North Shewa area. The proportion of successful breastfeeding techniques was low, as this community-based cross-sectional study verified. Hence, the researcher believes this study will add value to the scarce early childhood research in the area. It is pioneering research in documenting the cultural care practices and values systems of the North Shewa community.

The researcher shares Poluha's (2007) view that a richer image of modern childhood emerges as more studies with an active agenda of social research, including listening to children, are conducted. To this end, a few more elaborative kinds of research that theorize contemporary childhood issues that involve and listen to the side of children are also included in the review. One of these researches is by Tatek (2008); the study highlights similarities, inconsistencies, and anomalies in how children exercise their agency within families. This study begins with an analysis of the Ethiopian family collective before moving on to a discussion of families and houses and all of their various forms, structures, and purposes. It continues to look more closely at the concept of childhood, emphasizing how essential lifecycle events like birth,

naming, circumcision, and baptism interact with ideas of agency, particularly those related to symbolic agency. Sophia (2020), whose seven-month ethnographic field study examines children's relationships with parents and family members in Ethiopia, further addressed the children's agency question. Her study examines the expectations and intergenerational relationships between affluent and impoverished households in Addis Ababa and the outlying communities of Dangila, Ethiopia. These studies are informative and helpful for applying the postmodern theoretical framework.

In summary, this comprehensive review emphasizes the crucial role of understanding context and preserving culture in early childhood interventions. It highlights the direct link between culturally sensitive practices and positive outcomes in child development. Despite this, there is noticeable lack of ethnoparental research in Ethiopia. This reveals a gap in understanding localized child-rearing practices and their effects. Existing studies predominantly focus on institutionalized programs. They potentially overlook the intricacies of indigenous parenting methods and their impact on child development. The others that focus in familial studies like the ones by Sophi (2020) and Tatek (2013) are not limited to early childhood years. Nonetheless, the review identified numerous insights which imply that culture is a very crucial element which could significantly enhance early childhood programs and interventions and that there is a lot of rich experiences and knowledge to be learned from the communities in different parts of Ethiopia.

The review concludes that this issue is of significant importance warrants increased attention and further research. This will deepen understanding of ethnocultural factors in early childhood development. The call for more research is not merely an academic pursuit but a

vital step towards designing interventions that are culturally sensitive and developmentally effective. Ensuring all children can thrive while honouring their cultural heritage.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the approach followed in generating reliable and valid results to contribute to the research aims, objectives, and questions. It provides information on the following topics: (1) Research Design and Approach, (2) Data Collection Methods and Instruments, (3) Data Analysis Procedures and Techniques, and (4) Ethical Considerations. Four rounds of fieldwork were conducted over ten months for this study; each round took place in October 2022, December 2022 March 2023 and April.

3.1. The Research Design and Approach

A study approach applied to a given research should be linked to the principles and theoretical perspective adopted by the researcher (Mason & Watson, 2014). The study's methodological choice is guided by the nature of the study, the research questions, and the theories and empirical studies that the researcher discussed in the previous two chapters. The ongoing methodological readings I made and the thought processes in which the researcher carefully examined the practical assumptions behind the research questions helped me choose the right approach to conduct this study.

The overall objective of this study is to examine the cultural values and practices that shape the development of children raised in families of North Shewa Cultural Background. It required close observation of the rituals, signs, and symbols that are closely connected to the child's life. The topic of the study, by its very nature, requires spending long periods in the field and applying multiple methods that allow capturing the participants' perspectives. In light of the

study's various aspects, the researcher chose ethnography as the right approach to conduct this study.

According to Hammersely and Atkinson (2007), Ethnography is a method or set of methods where the ethnographer or researcher, for an extended period, overtly or covertly participates in people's daily lives, watching, listening, asking questions, and gathering available data to shed light on the issues that are the focus of the researcher.

Researchers in the field of childhood studies frequently favor ethnography (Christensen, 2004). The most significant benefit of using this method is that it enables them to actively engage in the research process while revealing their perspectives on daily life (James & Prout, 2015). Ethnography naturally assumes that children can understand the social world (James, 2001), and it also can enable researchers to get close to children and take full advantage of their social environment.

According to Hamersley and Atkinson, (2007), in an ethnographic study, a researcher can pose open-ended, flexible questions about the topic being investigated, and the people being studied can create meanings for their circumstances. Accordingly, since the this study focuses on meaning constructions, multiple data generation methods were employed to enable participants to participate and express their opinions and views in numerous ways like participating in interviews and observing as well as –participating their real life circumstances . The researcher established interaction with families and individuals in the community to observe their experiences and understand their views.

3.2. Research Setting

The research setting for this research is the North Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. North Shewa is a historical and cultural region that takes its name from the former

kingdom and province of Shewa. Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, the zone has a population of 1, 837,490 million people, mostly Amhara, who practice Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. The Oromia Region, South Wollo, the Oromia Zone, and the Afar Region border the zone. The zone has a diverse geography, ranging from highlands to lowlands, and has several natural and cultural attractions. The research participants reside in North Shewa Zone, Debrebirihan City, Bosena Woreda Metikoria Kebele and Goshebado Kebele.

3.3. Data Sources

The primary data sources were three families: parents, children, and older siblings. Close observation of the real life of the families was recorded. There was also discussion with traditional medicine practitioners because of their knowledge and expertise in indigenous health care. Discussions were made with grandparents in the family because of their more profound knowledge and experience of indigenous early childhood care in the past and the present.

3.3.1 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The purpose of this study is to describe, analyze, and understand the early childhood care practices and values of North Shewa Amhara. Hence, the focus is in getting deeper insight about the topic than to make generalizations. The researcher used simple random sampling method in which three families who have North Shewa Amhara cultural background and who are currently raising children up to the age of 8 were selected. And based on the data that emerged from the families, the researcher felt the need to incorporate traditional medicine practitioners and community elders as key informants. Consequently, conceptual needs rather than representativeness are the primary factor used to establish the sample size.

The informant families reside in Bosena Woreda Metikoria village, Goshebado village and Debirebirhan City. The families were observed in their real-world context and observation notes were taken duly. Data was collected through interviews, document analysis, observations, and examination of artifacts. In this process, overall, 20 interviews were made with 5 children, 5 parents, 4 grandparents, 3 traditional medicine experts, and 3 older children (siblings).

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1. Primary data collection methods

The empirical data in this thesis were generated through six months of ethnographic fieldwork that the researcher carried out in four rounds in two rural villages of Metikoria, Goshebado and Debirebirhan City. The ethnographic fieldwork activities included participant observations at home in everyday family life practices and observation of artifacts, spiritual ceremonies, different rituals, social events, traditional healers, neighbors, the farm, the shepherding field, and the playground. It also included unstructured interviews with young children, parents, neighbors, traditional medicine practitioners, and community elders. The participant observations allowed the researcher to observe the practices related to early childhood care. Moreover, the interviews gave the researcher a deeper understanding of the values behind different concepts and practices. Data gathered through interviews were not translated into English to save time and to avoid the risk of compromising their original meanings in the process.

3.4.1.1 Observation

Observation of the real life of families enabled the researcher to witness what was happening in the communities with regard to early child care. It was the leading instrument of data collection in this study, for it gives live data. The observation allowed the capturing of valuable insights that could be missed or disguised in the interviews. The researcher took notes, which helped her

achieve the research goal. The researcher has assumed both participant and non-participant roles in observing the life of the three families in their social gatherings, work, and different occasions. The observation was done in four rounds during the researcher's stay in Metikoria Kebele, Goshebado Kebele, and Debirebirhan City by staying for at least two weeks in each round within a six-month period.

3.4.1.2 Unstructured Interviews

The use of unstructured interviews for the collection of data gave the researcher the freedom to modify and add questions as the situation demands (Macky & Gass, 2005). Semi-structured interviews are also preferable because they do not restrict the respondents' views by providing predesigned answers to questions as in closed-ended questions (Creswell, 2012). For this purpose, an interview guide was designed, and based on that, the researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with the 5 parents, 5 children, 3 older siblings, 4 grandparents (community elders), and 3 indigenous medicine practitioners. The content of the interview was to share their perspectives on the values and practices of early childhood care. The interview was conducted in Amharic language to make the conversation appropriate to the language command of the interviewees.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures and Techniques

The categorization of particular pieces of data, as well as the development of a set of analytical categories that capture relevant data aspects, is a necessary step in the analysis of qualitative data (Atkinson and Hamersley, 2015). There are numerous ways to go about analyzing qualitative data. Thematic coding, sometimes called generic data analysis, is the chosen approach for this study. The method is mainly chosen for its robust methodological approach to analyse complex and culturally sensitive data. This method allows systematic exploration of insights, breaking

down complex data into manageable units, identifying recurring themes, and categorizing information into meaningful themes. It also allows for flexibility in analysis, adapting codes and themes as needed, and facilitating interpretation and synthesis of data.

The thematic analysis process followed the following six steps: understanding the data, creating initial codes, looking for themes across the data, reviewing themes, identifying themes, and preparing the report. These steps facilitate using "coding" as a methodical approach to viewing and processing qualitative data. Braun & Clarke (2006).

1.

Data familiarization: According to Robson (2011), rereading transcriptions is a great approach to becoming comfortable with the information. For this study, in this step, familiarization took place through transcribing the 20 interviews gathered from participants and the field notes and noting initial ideas by playing and replaying the audio and reading and rereading the transcripts. The interviews were transcribed in Amharic and were not translated to save time and not compromise the meaning. Central ideas for all transcripts were highlighted and jotted down at this phase.

2.

Generating initial coding: According to As Braun & Clarke (2006), assigning labels to data segments that capture their meaning or content is an excellent approach to generate initial coding. He further notes that initial coding is usually inductive, meaning that the codes emerge from the data rather than being predefined by the researcher. Initial coding can help the researcher to identify common themes or topics that recur in the data and to group them into broader categories for further analysis. For this thesis, during this phase, This process of coding was done manually on paper by rereading the transcripts and field notes, highlighting important

sections, and writing small phrases and keywords on the paper for ease in the process of going back and forth in reading and reviewing. Two hundred-seven codes were generated at this stage.

3.

Searching for themes across the data: As Braun & Clarke (2006 p. 87) put it, this phase is about "Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme" Braun & Clarke, (2006, p. 87). At this stage, similar topics with recurring codes got grouped into recognizable themes. It required frequent review and rereading of data to generate the themes. At this stage, eight global and overarching themes were generated.

4.

Reviewing Themes: Braun & Clarke (2023) suggest that this process may involve refining, merging, splitting, or discarding themes and creating sub-themes or categories within themes. This process involves generating three levels of themes: basic themes, organizing themes, and global themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Basic themes are the most minor units of meaning that can be identified in the data, such as words, phrases or sentences. Organizing themes are broader categories that relate basic themes based on their similarity or connection. Global themes are the overarching or main themes that capture the essence of the data as a whole and reflect the research question or aim. The relationship between these levels of themes can be visualized as a graded structure, where basic themes are nested within organizing themes and organizing themes are nested within global themes. In this research, most of these themes emerged in the empirical data analysis process allowed the researcher to observe some gaps in the data gathered in the first two rounds, so it initiated another round of data collection. It was helpful for filtering the data.

5

Defining and naming themes: At this stage, the scope and meaning of each theme are defined, and a concise and informative name that captures their essence is given for each theme. The researcher also considered how the themes and the overall research question relate to each other. Braun & Clarke (2006).

6.

Producing the report: in this final stage, production of detailed analytical report that presents and discusses the themes by relating them to the research question and the data collected through interviews and field notes took place.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

This chapter is organized into two sections. The first section presents the qualitative data analysis, including coding, categorization and interpretation of interview transcripts. The second section discusses the findings and implications of the data analysis for the research objectives and hypotheses.

The researcher followed a qualitative approach and used thematic analysis method to explore the values and practices of early child care. The observation is made in villages of Metkoria, Goshebado and Debirebirhan city. The participants of the interview were parents, grandparents, children, traditional healers and community elders. Overall, 20 interviews were made with 5 children, 5 parents, 4 grandparents, 3 traditional medicine experts and 3 older children (siblings). The participant families were also observed in their real-world context and observation notes were taken. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis.

The data analysis aimed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How is childhood the health and wellbeing, hygiene and cleanliness, nutrition and food, safety and accident prevention as well as learning and stimulation practiced in North shewa families?
- 2) What are the values behind the care practices?

4.1: Qualitative Data Analysis

The inductive generation of theme for this research followed the steps presented in the third chapter. Accordingly, the main categories and the subcategories of the generated themes are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Global Theme	Overarching Theme	Main Theme
Early Childhood Care Practices and Values of North Shewa Amhara	Early Childhood Health and Wellbeing Values and Practices	Values Related to Health and Wellbeing of Children
		Preventative Health and Wellbeing Care Practices
		Curative Health and Wellbeing Care Practices
		Surgical Health and Wellbeing Care Practices
	Early Childhood Hygiene and Cleanliness Values and Practice	Values Related to Water and Cleanliness
		Personal Hygiene Practices
		Environmental Hygiene Practices
	Early Childhood Nutrition and Food Values and Practices	Values Related to Food and Nutrition
		Food Production Practices
		Food preparation practices
		Food Serving Practices (Dinning)
	Early Childhood Safety and Accident Prevention values and Practices	Food Consumption
		Limiting Risk and Prevention of Injury
	Early Childhood Learning and Stimulation Values and Practices	Intervention Measures During time of Accidents
		Sibling –care
		Disciplining
		Songs, games, dances, stories, puns (enkokilish)
		Children's Social skills are nurtured
		Language development
	Values and Practices for Stimulating Psychological Development	

4.2: Early Childhood Care Values and Practices of North Shewa Amhara

According to Walsham (2012), various factors, such as history, religion, topography influence the practices and values of a community. History shapes a community's collective memory and identity, as well as its interactions with other communities. Religion provides a system of beliefs, values, and practices that define what is sacred or spiritual for a community and how it relates to the divine and the natural world. Topography affects a community's physical environment, resources, and livelihoods, as well as its cultural expressions and adaptations. These factors are not static or isolated rather they are dynamic and interrelated as they respond to changing social and geographical contexts.

Report of the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, confirms majority of the total population of North Shewa Amhara to be follower of the orthodox Christian religion.

According to Sisay (2020), the zone has a diverse topography, ranging from high mountains to lowlands and is affected by several challenges such as land degradation, drought, pests, and diseases that affect the productivity and food security of the farmers.

Among Christian Ethiopians, a child is often very much longed for and considered a “gift from God” (Kassa 2017).The data gathered through the interviews and observation field notes similarly reveal that the participant parents and elder community members consider children as gifts of God and as holistic beings that are connected to the family, community, and spirituality.

Furthermore

Studies on intergenerational relationships and experiences confirm that in Ethiopia, children’s work contribute to family economy as well as to the establishment of relationships between families (Bourdillon,2015). The data from the observation field notes and interview responses

also confirm that participant families view children as a growing individuals who can contribute to the wellbeing of the family by taking on duties and responsibilities that are appropriate to their capacity. They believe that including the child to contribute to household and livelihood tasks has two fold benefits; it helps to ease the life of the family and helps in supporting the holistic development of the child.

And for the families age is not a significant predictor of maturity and development. Instead, families expose their kids to varying tasks and duties according to each child's ability level. At any age, when a child learns to complete an activity on their own, their family inevitably gives them more responsibility. For example, within the same family, some young children began their independent cattle guarding duties at age four, while other siblings began at age eight. According Pankhurst et al. (2015), Ethiopian children start working from very young age, and their work is embedded in their relations with their families, their peers, and members of their communities.

The above views of the community regarding early childhood are consistently reflected in the child care issues of health, nutrition, cleanliness, safety, and stimulation that emerged from the data gathered through interview and observation which are presented below as main themes of the study following the coding process.

4.2.1. Early Childhood Health and Wellbeing Practices and Values

4.2.1.1) Care Practices Related to Children's Health and Wellbeing

The interview with the traditional medicine practitioners confirmed that there is no specialized traditional medical specialist for children only. Specialization is mainly related to a particular type of treatment, such as being a herbalist and wagesha (physiotherapist). Regardless, certain procedures are mainly suitable for children, like uvulectomy, removal of teeth, and circumcision.

Still, these practitioners may or may not treat adults also. However, some traditional practitioners are recognized for treating children better than others. Other than specific childhood illnesses, the traditional medication assumes that the causes of sickness and their treatments are more or less similar to adults. Nevertheless, the dosage prescribed for the treatment varies; usually, the dosage is lower by half or one-third of what is prescribed for adults, or other less aggressive treatments get prescribed when the intervention is found to be too strong for children.

Traditional healthcare practices can be categorized into three: preventative, curative, and surgical.

I) Preventative Health and Well-being Care Practices

All families actively implement traditional medicine approaches to prevent disease from happening to children and adult family members.

Rituals: Engaging children in religious rituals like Eminent, Kurban, and prayers is essential for their well-being. All families confirmed that they make sure their children attend these rituals regularly in their early childhood period. As is stated by one of the participant mother it is the most crucial for the wellbeing of children’.

Kitabs: Wearing kitab is a traditional practice of using amulets or scrolls containing verses from spiritual texts for health and protection purposes. Wearing kitab symbolizes a belief in the power of the written word and the divine intervention of God or Allah to prevent or cure diseases, ward off evil spirits, and bring good fortune (Giday et al.2013), (Kebede and Alemayehu, 2014) Wearing kitab is common among all families and the wider community. participants. It is mainly prescribed for children and women.

Eye make-up (antimony or *kool*). These are also put on children to protect them from the evil eye. Kool (eye liner) is applied to the eyes as a sign of beauty, health, and protection from evil

spirits. It is also believed to have medicinal properties, such as preventing eye infections, improving eyesight, and cooling the eyes from the sun. However, some studies have questioned the safety of kool due to the dangers of lead poisoning. Nevertheless, some families still apply kool in their children's eyes, looking for the above mentioned benefits.

Home remedies (such as breastfeeding and consuming the right immunity-boosting foods and drinks: Mothers usually provide garlic, ginger, *feto*, etc., for children when they observe flu symptoms or to prevent children from catching flu during flu seasons. In the same manner, they also provide breast milk for children, usually till three years of age.

Keeping the body warm is also encouraged, as cold (wind) is believed to cause sickness. Traditional clothes are made of cotton, known to keep the body warm. Mothers often carry their children, especially till three years of age, at their back, mainly in the morning and night, to keep them warm and safe. Adults and children wear *netela* (traditional overall), *shash* (garment for covering the head), scarf, and *gabi* (thick traditional overall) put them on their heads and on top of their clothes.

Physical strength is highly valued. Families believe that other than nutrition, engaging children in various activities and physical challenges at early age can contribute to their physical strength and their ability to defend diseases. As a result, children are exposed to different chores and are given responsibility for household tasks and farms from as early as four. They often help with shepherding, fetching different household items to adults, watching and caring for younger siblings, etc. Their tasks are done under the supervision of adults. Parents intervene in cases where children try to engage in activities beyond their capacity.

Adults often refrain from passing remarks on the developmental excellence of children as overstating the children's growth and triumph is believed to cause ill or sickness in the child.

They are expected to mockingly spit on the child and spare what they said in case they make such remarks. Otherwise, their words are believed to cause ill, and the child's excellence will be halted.

As one of the respondent fathers states, "Engaging in physical work makes children healthy and strong. Otherwise, they will become weak and will not be able to fight off disease

II) Curative Health and Well-being Care Practices

The main participants in the curative side of traditional medicine practice are professional traditional healers, called by various names in various regions of the nation. In North Shewa, they are referred to as medhanit awakis. As stated earlier, the secular medhanit awaki /kitelbetash(herbalists), use plants as their primary therapy method, are one of the most well-known groups of secular healers.

The practitioners primarily use physical examinations and patient interrogation to determine disease conditions. They create their medications in various quantities and formats, and they give them using numerous methods.

III) Surgical Health and Well-being Care Practices

Bone setting, እንጥልመቁረጥ(uvulectomy), መግረዝ(circumcisions), መብጥት(bleeding and cupping), መቁረጥ(cautery), ቆዳመጥበስ(scarification), and ጥርስመንቀል(tooth extraction) are traditional procedures similar to surgery.

Wogesha: The setting of bones is regarded as a crucial surgical technique that necessitates a particular level of expertise and competence on the healer's part. The healer involved in setting bones is called *wogesha*. The wogesha frequently exercises his or her abilities in aseptic settings, with or without medications (Endashaw, 2023). The process is used for children who suffer from trauma (dislocation, strain, etc.) or deformity. The procedure involves the use of herbal

medicines, massage, and manual manipulation of the bones. As is observed by the researcher, the society widely accept and use this intervention.

The wogesha who participated in this study was an older woman who claims to have gained her skill and knowledge from her employer (foster mother), with whom she lived a long time ago. She then practiced and applied what she learned in her children. Later, people from the neighbourhood started recognizing her gift and bringing their children to her for healing. During her stay, the researcher witnessed a nine-month-old child from one of the families in Debirebirhan city. The child got intense pain starting from the night before. He was continuously crying and unable to sleep. So he was taken to the wogesha for treatment in the afternoon. Upon arrival, the healer observed him by gently massaging his whole body and then identified his problem to be *kichit* (strain) on his back below his neck. She then massaged him by applying petroleum jelly. He was crying very hard during the massaging time. After the massage, his mother carried him on her back (*mazel*) and, a few minutes afterward, he seemed to be well.

Circumcision: Another prevalent practice in this regard is the practice of circumcisions. The surgical removal of the penis' foreskin is known as circumcision. Within North Shewa Amhara, it is practiced for various reasons, such as religious, cultural, or personal. As in most of the country, the population uses traditional medicine for the circumcision of male and female children. Traditional medicine practitioners perform circumcision mainly by cutting or tying the foreskin. The families and practitioners who participated in this study advocate that circumcision positively affects hygiene, infection prevention, and sexual health in boys. And it helps girls to

ease labour during child bearing. The circumcision of girls is prohibited by law in the study area but the observations of the researcher prove that families still circumcise girls.

Cautery and scarification: Cautery is a traditional medical practice that involves burning or scarring the skin or flesh with a heated instrument or a caustic substance. It is used to treat various ailments, such as infections, inflammations, pains, and bleeding. It was explained by a participant traditional medicine expert that this are still very prevalent and useful in treatment of the above mentioned problems.

Tooth extraction: The participant parents and the surgical traditional medicine expert also confirmed that tooth extraction for children is common, where traditional healers or family members remove healthy primary teeth using unsterile equipment. This practice is believed to cure or prevent various illnesses, such as diarrhoea, fever, vomiting, and malnutrition.

According to Mekete et al., (2020), the extraction of tooth in children is not recommended by modern dentistry, as it can interfere with the normal development and function of the oral cavity. Regardless, two families who participated in the research believe it benefits children and should be applied.

The surgical traditional medicine expert who participated in the interview performs massaging, uvulectomy, circumcisions, cautery, and scarification for children. She said that people from all parts of the country come to her seeking medical attention due to her reputation for successfully healing many children and adults. She lives in the villages of one of the participant families, circumcised all the three children, two boys (aged twelve and seven years), as well as girl that is a year and four months old, have been circumcised, their uvulectomy performed

and their tooth extracted by this older woman. The traditional healer stressed that she boils and sterilizes her surgical tools before and after use.

As per the findings of Fassil (2003), at the household level, traditional medical treatments are also frequently administered. There is substantial information regarding therapeutic plants in the non-professional public sphere, where most illnesses are identified and managed at the home level. When traditional experts are contacted, it's usually because of their specific traditional knowledge and expertise regarding a narrow range of health issues. The majority of families cultivate or collect these plants near their residences.

All families have claimed to have some understanding of medicinal plants and other ways of treating ordinary children's health issues or sicknesses like flu, viral infection (*mich*), fever, diarrhoea and vomiting, burning, fungal infections on the head and skin, etc. They often take children to traditional healers if the problem persists after using different home remedies and traditional medications at home.

4.2.1.2) Values Related to Health and Wellbeing of Children

One of the things all families and community members hope and aspire for children is good health. The respondents believe that health is a gift from God. This is also observed in the language people use every day, like in greetings, in which people wish good health to each other by saying "ጤና ይስጥልኝ" (May you be granted good health!). This implies that health is instead a blessing graced by God. And as one participant grandparent put it, "health is wealth." which shows the high value and priority the community places health in. And parents and families often try their best to protect the child's health. However, they believe a child is protected by the grace of God. As a mother from Debirebirihan stated,

“The main protector is God. So the child should regularly take hymen (kurban) for protection and good health.”

The families also believe in the presence of supernatural forces that can enter a child's body to "disturb the health of the child"; the shadows cast by an evil eye could be the source of sickness. Moreover, they also believe that climatic and weather conditions such as heat, rain, or cold wind could cause illness. The various early childhood health practices of the families imply their belief that child's health could be impacted by the physiological, religious, cosmological, ecological, and social factors. This shows their holistic view towards the physical and psychological health.

4.2.2. Early Childhood Hygiene and Cleanliness Practices and Values

4.2.2.1) Practices Related to Hygiene and Cleanliness

I) Dental Hygiene

In dental hygiene, children are always encouraged to gurgle with water after meals and wash their mouth with at least water to avoid mich (mouse dermatitis). Participants believe that exposure to direct sunlight with an unwashed mouth after eating food results in mich (mouse dermatitis or blisters that form around the mouth). As a result, children are constantly reminded to wash their mouths and to gurgle with water after eating. Mothers and other family members wash infants and toddlers mouth after feeding. Families who participated in the study confirmed use of branches of olive tree (weirazaf), and twigs (chifrig) as mefakia (traditional tooth brush) to keep their teeth hygienic.

II) Body Hygiene

Frequent washing of children is encouraged as water is believed to be cleansing, healing, and soothing. Whenever children act cranky and irritated, the first act is to wash their bodies, massage them with butter if available, and carry them at the back (mazel) to get them to sleep.

Infants and toddlers before and during potty training are often left uncovered below the waist (without nappies) when they are active to play so that they will have the freedom to pee and defecate as needed. Moreover, whenever they pee or defecate, the children and the ground get cleaned by washing the children and often by wiping the floor. This is believed to lessen the occurrence of infection and rash in children's skin.

After washing, butter or petroleum jelly is used as a lotion to resolve the dryness of the skin and head. Furthermore, it is used to massage children's bodies and to keep their skin healthy. Sometimes, a finely ground yellowish plant called mekmeko is applied as a beauty regimen to keep children's skin smooth and fair.

The leaves and branches of a bush tree named lit (ልጥ) get crushed and applied on children while washing. It is believed to cleanse the hair and keep it healthy and shiny. In cases where the hair develops dandruff or fungal infection, for remedy, there is a plant named *beles* or *yeberehakulkuwal*(cactus) with a thick leaf that gets slashed in half, and its jell is applied by rubbing directly on the head, which later gets washed. Keeping children's hair hygienic incorporates washing, combing, drying the hair, applying butter or hair oil, and braiding the hair if it is a girl.

Hand Washing

According to WHO (2010), many health researches prove that regular hand washing is one of the best ways to avoid spreading communicable diseases. Likewise, washing hands is part of the

dining routine for this community. Washing bowls and jugs are served to wash hands before and after meals. Children as young as four could serve the washing utensils in family gatherings. They are expected to stand with their head bowed down when they pour water to serve the adults who gather to eat. This is one symbolic act of showing courtesy and respect accompanying hygiene cultures in families. Parents at the spot often encourage and remind the child to bow down and pour the water properly when serving elders. Similarly, older siblings assist younger ones in washing their hands.

III) Environmental Hygiene Practices

Families use different waste disposal and removal techniques, including water, fire, the sun, covering and burying, etc.

Contrary to the community's tendency to classify animal and human defecations as dirt, cow dung is used in families' daily lives for different practical purposes.

The house floor, where young children spend time playing on, is often kept clean and smooth by coating it with cow dung (እባት-መለቅለቅ). The dung is also believed to prohibit the breeding of fleas and other crawlies in the house.

Smoke is also used to create a good smell and to discard and chase away bad spirits, fleas, and bugs from the families' house where children play and sleep in. Weira, kebericho, wegerit and hariti are commonly used trees, twigs, shrubs, and herbs used for this purpose.

Other than washing, the sun's rays are believed to have the capacity to culminate in the emergence and flourishing of fleas and other harmful organisms found in mattresses, pillows, garments, etc. To this effect, from time to time, both children's and adults' sleeping garments get spread in the sun for long hours.

Appliances are sterilized by boiling or directly burning them in fire. Dipping them in katicala (a traditional strong alcoholic drink) is also a common sterilization practice.

As Esser & Seemagn (2003) confirmed, the endod plant (*Phytolacca dodecandra*) has been used as a detergent and as a traditional medicine for centuries in Ethiopia. In their study, they confirmed that people of all ages reported familiarity with the plant and its detergent and medicinal uses. Likewise, families in this study are familiar with the plant and use it as soap to wash the clothes of children and the whole family (Esser et al., 2003).

Hidar Sitaten, a yearly ceremony (ritual) of gathering and burning environmental waste, takes place on Hidar 13 of the Ethiopian Calander (November 21 G.C) in North Shewa Amhara. People burn piles of dirt, trash, and other things in front of their homes. This practice is thought to have a symbolic significance of cleansing, purification, and renewal. On the other hand, a study by Bulto (2020) has implied that the ceremony harms air quality, particularly in areas with high garbage production and population density.

4.2.2.2) Values Related to Hygiene and Cleanliness

Water is a vital resource for human development and a symbol of cultural and spiritual significance. The researcher couldn't locate any research made in Ethiopia to evaluate the meanings and values attached to water for different groups of people, depending on their religion, ethnicity, livelihood, and location. However, from the interviews with the families, the observations, and other documents researched, it became possible to analyze and deduce the cultural values the families attach to water.

- 1. Water is considered sacred.** It is believed that God gives water for free and should not be used with greed. All families believe that water should be shared with anyone who needs it. Elders teach children to give water to anyone who asks for it. As was stated by a

grandmother in one family: "ውሃ የሬሳ ማጠባጠያ ነው፤ አይከለከልም," meaning one should not deny water to whoever needs and asks for it since it is used "to wash dead body."

- 2. Water as a source of life and blessing:** Water is associated with purification and salvation for families. Water is used for baptism, ablution, and other cleansing and renewal rituals.

The participants' meanings of water emanate mainly from their Orthodox Christian religious background. *Baptism* is a rite that celebrates turning an infant into a complete human being on the 40th and 80th day after birth for boys and girls, respectively. It is also the initiation and adoption of the child into the Christian family, the Church. Baptism involves using water by immersing oneself to signify the washing away of sins, the death and rebirth in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Since washing away filth in bodily things is done more efficiently and more commonly by water, baptism symbolizes the washing away of sins by water made holy by the Word of God (Aquinas, 1975).

Epiphany, or Timket, is a significant religious and cultural festival that celebrates the baptism of Jesus Christ in the River Jordan. It is also a time to reaffirm one's faith and identity as an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian. The immersing and sprinkling of water and baptism in this holiday represent the cleansing of sins and renewal of the life of the believers. The priests bless the water and sprinkle on the faithful, who immerse themselves in it. Epiphany is one of the most celebrated holidays in the North Shewa community and also signifies the value the community places on the holy water. As the saying goes, "ለጥምቀት ያልሆነቀሚስደ በጣጣስ", which is to mean "new clothes have no importance if they cannot be worn for Timket". New clothes are bought for the children for this holiday. Moreover, children go to the holy water, timketebahir

(sea of baptism) with parents and family. The whole community participates in the festival for two days, with much singing and dancing.

Baptizing in water symbolizes one's identity as a child of God, faith in the Trinity, union with Christ, and belonging to an ancient and diverse Christian community.

Nevertheless, when we come to the practical use of water, as confirmed by Mekuanint (2021), poverty and lack of access to clean water harm personal hygiene of many rural communities in Ethiopia. Likewise, the participant families from the villages use spring water for domestic and drinking consumption because of the lack of clean water infrastructure in their area.

Additionally, the parents involved in the research believe that training children how to serve hand washing water and utensils before and after eating teaches youngsters to respect their elders.

4.2.3 Early Childhood Nutrition and Food Values and Practices

The values that North Shewa Amhara communities attach to food go beyond considering it as source of nourishment, to a means of communion, and a way of expressing gratitude and hospitality. They consider food as is a gift from God that should be shared with others, especially the poor and the needy. The families' engagement in mahber, which involves inviting guests to share a meal and a prayer at home or in the church also uses food as strengthening the bonds of friendship and community. These values are further elaborated in analysing the practices related to food preparation, dinning, and consumption.

4.2.3.1) Practices Related to Food and Nutrition

I) Food Production Practices

Children engage and play their role in agricultural processes just like they take responsibility for other family affairs. Young children often contribute to the process by guarding cattle or

observing toddlers and infants, while parents and older children get involved in farming. The quote from one of the fathers explains the responsibilities:

“We all go out to the farm together as a family. Everybody plays a part. The younger children guard the cattle, and the older ones help with the farming activities...My older child started guarding the cattle independently when he was just four. The second one, however, started [doing so] very late, around the age of seven. Engaging them in these tasks makes them strong so they will not become weak and incompetent.”

In the harvesting and post-harvesting periods, beyond the collaboration of individuals in the family, neighbours come together to help each other to complete the task quickly before the rainy season begins and their crops get ruined.

II) Food preparation practices

Food preparation is another collaborative effort, and children play significant roles in the family during food preparation. Usually, mothers and other female family members take the primary responsibility of preparing food. The children usually go out with older siblings to get firewood from the nearby trees. Older children also help prepare *kubet* (a block made of dried cattle dung) used as charcoal in making fire for meal preparation.

The children assist with bringing in and fetching back cooking utensils and items from the main house to the kitchen. Children also assist with washing dishes and other cooking materials, caring for infants and toddlers, etc.

For more prominent ceremonies, family gatherings, or in any time of need, it is customary for neighbours, especially women, to play a role in the food preparation process. Food gifts and sharing are also necessary to express social belonging (Goody J., 1982). In this regard, it is

customary for neighbours and friends of the family to contribute (gift) *injera* and *wot* (Ethiopian flat bread along with a pot of stew) to support the hosting families in various ceremonies or occasions. The occasions can be the birth of a new baby, baptism ceremony, wedding, mourning, etc. Such practice symbolizes societal care and affection.

III) Food Serving Practices (Dinning)

Dining is a collective process. Individuals seldom eat alone. The families eat meals (*injera*) on communal plates, symbolizing closeness and togetherness. They usually share one plate with the same *injera*. It is also customary to feed one another in bites called *gursha*. While eating from the same plate, younger children are fed by their mothers in the form of *gursha*. This is intended to make sure that they eat enough since they may not eat at a fast pace and with bites as big as the adults and older children. *Gursha* symbolizes love and care.

Children are also expected to follow strict discipline when they sit together with adults to eat from the same plate. Below is a list mentioned by one of the mothers about the discipline children must have in communal plates:

- Children are expected to eat only from the immediate front side. Reaching across the plate to eat from the other side is impolite.
- Children are not allowed to use their left hand for eating as it symbolizes impurity and bad luck.
- Children are not allowed to talk while eating and should not engage in other tasks during dining.

Children serve by rounding a particular jug and bowl used for washing hands. They pour water for each person. The washing procedure takes place before and after eating.

Moreover, *difodabo* (traditional round bread) has a unique role in the baptism ritual of the new-born child. Families lie the baptised child on *difo-dabo* when they come back home from the baptism ceremony of the church, and this is a symbolic act of wishing a bright future and good fortune for the new-born child.

Food Consumption

Cereals like teff, corn, sorghum, barley, wheat and millet are the most commonly available food types. Common legumes include broad beans, lentils, chickpeas, and field peas are typical. The beans and other grains are also usually available toasted whole or boiled (*kolo* or *nifiro*, respectively) and are consumed as a snack with coffee and used in the stew (*wot*) whole, divided, or as flour. Everyday vegetables include red onions, which are routinely used; garlic is used widely, while kale (*ye'habeshagommen*) is also common. It is affordable and accessible for the majority of the year. Other than this, pumpkins and green chickpeas are used.

Furthermore, tubers such as sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) and potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) are occasionally used as main diets. From the spices, the most important are chili and bird's eye chili. These are used in the spice mixtures of *berbere* and *mitmita*. Even though fruits are not grown in large quantities in the area, the relatively common fruits are lemons and bananas. Furthermore, the most available Oilseeds are niger flax, sunflowers, and safflowers.

Animal products like milk, chicken, and meat are also common, while fish is uncommon in the research setting. However, milk is scarce in the area, and because the quantity produced by each cow is scares. Small children are typically given fresh milk. Butter, low-fat sour milk cottage cheese (*ayib*), yoghurt and sour milk get prepared from milk. Meat from cows, sheep, and goats are consumed, but for most families, ceremonial occasions like holidays are the only times they eat meat. Chicken are common, but they are killed for large feasts, while the eggs are primarily

retained for sale. Children are rarely served these food items in regular days unless they are from wealthy family.

Breast feeding: Like most families in Northern Ethiopia, sample families here also initiate breastfeeding practice immediately after birth. Children get exclusively breastfeed, usually until six months, and start complementary feeding at the age of 6 months (Kebede, 2014).

Complementary food: After children start complementary feeding, they are often provided with *atmit* and *genfo*, which are semi-liquid and thick porridge, respectively, made from a mixture of cereals, legumes, and oil seeds. Children are also encouraged to try and taste what the family eats. Usually, *fitfit*, which is a mixture of injera and non-spicy stew (*alicha wot*) is prepared for children at the beginning of starting the family diet. Injera with stew like *shiro wot* (stew made from beans, peas, or chick peas), *misir wot* (stew made from lentils), *kik wot* (stew made of beans), etc. These are prepared less spicy, without pepper (*alicha*) for the children's sake.

Another factor in this subject that serves an expression of separateness in the identity creation of the community and contributes to the choice of food is the fasting culture. As Orthodox Christians, most observe the fast that the church ordains. Hence, their fasting involves abstaining from animal products, such as meat, dairy, and eggs, and all meals and liquids before 3:00 pm, for up to 250 days a year. Also, during the week, two days, Wednesdays and Fridays, are mostly fasting days, so eating animal products on these days is taboo. Furthermore, since the families usually eat together, it also impacts children's consumption.

4.2.3.2) Values Related to Food and Nutrition

The values that North Shewa Amhara communities attach to food go beyond considering it as source of nourishment, to a means of communion, and a way of expressing gratitude and hospitality. They consider food as is a gift from God that should be shared with others, especially

the poor and the needy. The families' engagement in mahber, which involves inviting guests to share a meal and a prayer at home or in the church also uses food as strengthening the bonds of friendship and community. These values are further elaborated in analysis of their practices related to food preparation, dinning, and consumption.

4.2.4 Early Childhood Safety and Accident Prevention

4.2.4.1) Practices Related to Limiting Injury Risk and Prevention

I) Preventative Practices

Religious Belief: Participant families believe that God has a plan and purpose for each person's life, and He guides and protects them through various means, such as angels, saints, prayers, sacraments, and the Holy Spirit. As a result, they use different symbolic representations that mirror these values like making prayers, drinking and emersion in holy waters, putting eminet (holy soil) on their bodies, carrying pictures of the angels in their pockets, and wearing kitabs. The church also recognizes the role of human agency and wisdom in preventing accidents and ensuring safety. For instance, the use of safety measures as a means of respecting God's gift of life.

Togetherness: This value is reflected in all aspects of the community life. By virtue of its nature, it helps keep children under supervision all the time. As a result, children are not only physically protected, but their emotional and psychological well-being is kept well because they are guarded by the love and protection of the people they love and relate to, their families and neighbors. As a father from Metkoria village expressed,

“When the mother is away for any reason, the neighbours take care of the children by feeding them, cleaning them, changing their clothes if necessary until the mother returns.”

II) Curative Measures (Intervention Measures during Time of Accidents)

However, when and if accidents happen, traditional medical treatments are also available; herbal medicines are primarily available at home and are used to treat burning, poison, wounds, bleeding, etc. If the accidents are severe, children will be taken to traditional medicine practitioners depending on the nature of the accident. The following extract from the interview with the herbalist gives insights into the types of medicines used for different injuries.

“A plant named '*Amedmado*' treats wounds that children may get from falling. It heals wounds and treats infection; another plant named '*ahiyajoro*' is also used to treat wounds... Moreover, '*Kesse*' is also a plant used to stop bleeding.... Furthermore, for burning, another plant called '*Yedinigay libs*', usually dried and ground and kept at hand in the household, is used to treat burns. Depending on the type of burning, raw eggs are also used as remedies for burning. Other than that, *ret* (aloe vera) gets crushed and mixed with water and is forced to be drunk by a poisoned child to extract the poison by vomiting in case a child accidentally drinks a poisonous substance. Milk is also used as a home remedy for diluting poison.”

4.2.4.2) Values Related to Safety and Accident Prevention

Safety is one of the concepts that can be seen as socially constructed, as different groups may have different definitions and expectations of what constitutes to a safe environment, behaviour, or situation. The cultural contexts of injury determinates are significant and are defined as acquired knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors passed on by generations and contributing to injury vulnerability. The environments in which people live determine the level of injury risk and opportunities for injury prevention (Sue-anne, 2015).

Worldwide research recognizes the significant impact physical and socio-economic environments and cultural backgrounds have on safety (WHO, 2008).

Child safety and injury prevention strategies have been quite challenged between scientific and academic views (Wyver, et al., 2010). The scientific approach to reducing injury rates is based on cause-and-effect theory, whereby injury risk is eliminated by avoidance of the cause (NPHP, 2004). The academic approach where a certain level of personal risk is required for a child's optimal development is supported by Ungar (2007), who argues healthy risk-taking is considered necessary to achieve certain benefits and is an essential component of identity formation. However, whilst lifestyles and behavior influence injury, our choices affect safety, informed by many factors, including cultural background, environment, socio-economic circumstances, gender, and age (O'Neill, 2015).

4.2.5 Early Childhood Learning and Stimulation Practices and Values

Learning is crucial for the development of children. It is defined as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits, and values through experience, experimentation, observation, reflection, study and instruction. (Myers 2005). The child's current developmental status either facilitates or inhibits present and future learning. (Levinger 1992) Thus, learning is a vital part of the development process, and the outcome of development is greatly affected by the quality of care a child receives. One of the essential aspects of early childhood development is providing a stimulating and nurturing environment for children to learn and grow. (Kenea, 2020)

4.2.5.1) Early Learning and Stimulation Practices and Values

Holistic view of learning and development: Learning and development of the child takes place in the child's everyday life with the family. Especially until the child joins the 'Kolo timihirt', or 'formal education' at around seven or eight years of age, the child's learning continues at home

within the family through participation in different aspects of life that add (contribute) to the life of the family and the community by engaging in different works that contribute to the wellbeing of the family. According to Bolin (2006), this beginning of work at an early age ensures a less stressful and more reliable transition to adulthood than having a particular age at which work can start. This allows children to be exposed to more challenging tasks step by step; as they become competent in some tasks, they can learn new ones. Hence, numerical age alone does not fully understand a child's maturity; the age at which childhood ends and adulthood begins varies by culture and over time (Abebe, 2019). The responses of participants and the observation in families real life, shows that families encourage the children to participate in different responsibilities and works from a very early age. And different children master the tasks at different stages. As a result, their interpretation of development and maturity is not strictly measured by age. An account of an interview with a father from Gosh Bado village states that his first child started guarding cattle independently at the age of four while, his second child took the responsibility at the age of seven.

Sibling care

Sibling care is a common way of socialization and 'priming' of children for collective responsibility (Nsamenang, 1992). Older siblings take a very critical role in the stimulation of Children. In my observation of the everyday life of the families, I observed that older children often spend time caring for younger ones. During their plays, they often share the songs, stories, and games they learn at formal school and the indigenous' Kes timihirt bet'. The younger children also accompany their older siblings to the Kestimhirt bet and get the chance to participate in the classes.

Disciplining

Parents use strict and authoritarian methods for disciplining their children, such as physical punishment (like pinching and whooping) and reprimand using verbal and facial expressions (scolding, insulting, frowning...). These methods are often influenced by their religious background which emphasizes obedience, humility, and self-control. The following quotations from the bible are presented because they summarise the values that guide physical disciplining.

- "A child who is not disciplined disgracefully disowns its mother; a rod and a reprimand impart wisdom" (Proverbs 29:15).
- "A discipline that is painful at first does not appear nice at all. Those who have been schooled by it, however, will bring forth a harvest of peace and justice later on (Hebrews 12:11).
- Ephesians 6:4 advises fathers not to aggravate their kids. Rather, they must raise kids according to God's instructions. A kid must receive gentle, corrective, and loving physical discipline as part of their "training and instruction of the Lord."

All interviewed parents agree that children should never be subjected to physical punishment to the point of genuine bodily harm. On the other hand, they think that providing children with suitable and controlled physical discipline is beneficial for their wellbeing and proper upbringing. The following quote extracted from the interview of a mother displays their general attitude towards discipline.

“How can a child know the wrong from the right if he is not scolded, pinched or whooped? Ohh, it is not possible”

Songs, games, dances, stories, puns (enkokilish), tongue twisters,

These practices are big parts of the culture and children experience them with their time with siblings, with their mothers or other adults from their families and neighbourhood. Children also play with other neighbourhood friends in the neighbourhood field grounds. In my stay I have observed different songs being sung in different occasions, in holidays, in religious ceremonies, in children games, in different occasions like weddings, parties etc. And music is a big part of the culture and as part of the community, children participate in all.

Games, there are different kinds of childhood games played by children. Some are traditional games and others may be new ones imported to the villages from schools and other places and are now part of the culture, like lebana police (chasing), ekaka (role plays), kililibosh (pebbles), katekate, tibatibo, yichimindinat, maharebenyayachu etc. and board games like gebeta are very common. 'Ekaka' allows children to imitate and practice different cultural roles and responsibilities expressed in different actions of adults they observe in real life. They also demonstrate their capability to convert cultural process into play practices. It is their learning mechanism. Parten (1932). Young children often engage in playing 'ekaka' in their neighbourhood and in the compounds of one of the families' houses. And when they engage in dramatic plays, they create different play materials that represent the different cooking and working items they see being used like utensils, foods, dolls, toys by using variety of material they find in their environment. Vygotsky (1967) assert that participation in dramatic and creative play activities is essential for the social and intellectual development of young children.

Songs, The songs are a rich expression of the history, identity and values of the people. I observed different songs being sung by children in their everyday play at home and in the playgrounds some of the songs brought to the neighbourhood by older children from school. And others are traditional children songs like itemete, bezabebega, holiday abebayehosh, hoyahoye

etc, and other wedding songs, religious songs, and different songs sung in festivals and holidays. Mothers also sing lullabies and carry their infants and toddlers at the back (mazel) to make them fall sleep/

Dance: One of the cultural aspects of this region is the traditional dance, eskista, which is a shoulder dance that involves rhythmic movements of the upper body. It is performed by children, men and women, usually accompanied by traditional music and songs. The dance is also a form of social expression and communication, as the dancers can convey emotions, messages and stories through their gestures. It is widely practiced especially during religious festivals, weddings and other celebrations.

4.2.6 Values and Practices Related to children's Social skills

The observations and interviews with families reveal that the social development of children in early childhood period is nurtured through participation in different social spaces. The mother takes the baby with her especially until the child turns three. And after wards whenever there are occasions, events, and ceremonies, the norm is to invite the whole family. Not just parents or adults. Especially some occasions, holidays and social gatherings like mahiber are more suited for children.

For instance, Mahibers are mentioned by an interviewer as a 'socialization space for children'. Children get the opportunity to meet new families and maintain friendship and to meet distant family members. In mahibers, there is a special session that the host prepares for children. In this session, children get the chance to enjoy and have fun through stories, songs, games, puns etc.

The Other holidays is Epiphany, in this festival, older children take part in the dancing and the singing and enjoy the parade with their families. The family buys new clothes for all children and women at this time.

The week of Fasika (Easter) the week right after Easter is dedicated for festival for young children, older children and youth. Children/ youth from surrounding neighbourhoods come and engage in different traditional matches like rur (Ethiopian Hockey) which is now replaced by football in the villages. And rur is discouraged now because of its highly aggressive encounter and high accident occurrence. During this time, every day for one week, the children meet when the sun cools down and stay up to 11:00p.m at night singing, dancing and playing different games. In Gosh Bado, I had the chance to see where they convey for this festival. The youth gather in the big fields allocated for this holiday while younger children gather in the fields near their houses.

4.2.7 Values and Practices Related to Children's Language development:

The language of communication for the child is Amharic. The language symbolizes the religious, historical and cultural identity of the people. People have rich culture of using proverbs and expressions in their communication. In family gatherings during coffee ceremonies and in other gatherings it is common for adults, fathers, mothers and grandparents tell children stories and proverbs, puns, stories, riddles, and tongue twisters. These are used to entertain, educate and enrich the oral culture of children. Children have big opportunity to spend longer times with parents and family which allows them to hear different expressions and proverbs being used in the daily language. Other than that in their plays it is common for children to play by asking each other enkakilish (riddles), to tell each other stories, to challenge with tongue twisters, and tell each other puns.

The indigenous education system 'kestimihirt' starts after the age of seven/eight. Geez script is utilised to write Amharic left to right. The name of the graphemes is fidäl (fidel), which can be translated as "script", "alphabet", "letter", or "character". Additionally, younger siblings

frequently teach children how to count and recognise letters at home or in 'kestimihirt' bets as games.

4.2.8 Values and Practices Related to Stimulating Psychological Development

makef,(Hugging) mesam,(kissing) Memerek,(blessing) mazel, (carrying children at the back), abrometegnati (co-sleeping)

These practices are a big part of the culture. Moreover, love and affection are reflected in children in such ways by all who care for them (the close families, extended families, neighbours, and the whole community). According to developmental psychology researcher Ann Bigelow (2022), physical contact is essential for the proper growth and development of infants and children. Hugs and kisses also increase oxytocin levels, a hormone that plays a role in forging social bonds, boosting self-esteem, reducing anger and stress, and enhancing comfort and safety.

According to Belay D, (2007), among Ethiopian mothers, the main reasons for co-sleeping are convenience, warmth, protection, bonding, and breastfeeding. Co-sleeping is seen as nurturing the child's physical, emotional, and social development and fostering a sense of belonging and security. As a result, co-sleeping is also seen as a way of respecting the child's needs and preferences and honouring the parents' roles and responsibilities. Moreover, blessing children symbolizes the hope and gratitude of the parents and the community for the gift of life. It is also used as a verbal reward and encouragement for children. Mirika(blessing) is a ritual that accompanies coffee ceremonies, cutting difodabo (traditional holiday bread), and other occasions. Older people usually say the blessings. And mothers and other older people often bless their children for encouragement. All participant parents and grandparents observed often

bless the young children whenever children try new skills, help out with house hold tasks, show obedience etc.

Attachment

The Role of Extended Family Care and sibling care: As was confirmed by the research (Kassa, 2017), the extended family provides a protective social environment for children to develop multiple attachments with others. This is another widespread practice in the North Shewa, Amhara. The children are handed into the care of extended family whenever the mother feels unwell or if a new child arrives. In my interview with a mother, it was mentioned that neighbours also play such a roles. The quotation below presents her account.

In this study a participant mother mentioned that siblings are given responsibility to take care of their youngsters develop attachment which is critical for keeping the family bond strong.

Chapter 5 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

In this chapter major findings of the study have been summarized, conclusions are drawn from major the findings and recommendations are forwarded based on the conclusions that are presented.

5.1 Summary

The thesis explored the early childhood care practises and values of families with North Sherwa cultural background through the use of a qualitative technique of inquiry, the study examined the phenomenon in detail. The ethnographic design enabled the researcher to by examine the daily lives of families closely and made in-depth interviews, and observations. As a result, 207 codes were inductively generated and 22 main themes were formed based on the codes. The research thematically analysed data based on the generated themes. Accordingly the analysed findings are summarised and presented as below.

With regard to early childhood health care practices and values, the view of participant families shows raising a healthy child is gifted by God. Their values towards children's health reflect the relatedness of the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and environmental dimensions of health and wellbeing. Families take their children to the religious or secular traditional medicine practitioners, whose skill they believe are gifted by God, for treatment of the health of their children. Findings show that there are unique and diverse preventative, curative and surgical practices that help to address the needs of the health and wellbeing of children. These findings are in line with the existing researchs of Tammy (2013) and Janetius (2016).

Regarding early childhood hygiene and cleanliness practices and values, the research findings show that families consider water as sacred and source of life. The study implies that there are unique and diverse personal and environmental practices that are used to keep children and their

environments hygienic and the unpacked values behind these practices relate to purity, respect and courtesy. And even though the researcher was not able to locate any research made in Ethiopia regarding the values of people towards hygiene, water and purity, in this research it was possible to understand that the value of the North Shewa families is influenced by their orthodox Christian religious background.

In relation to the practices and values concerning food and nutrition of children, Breast feeding of infants till 6 months of age and starting of complementary food after 6 months is the usual practice in line with the findings of (Kebede, 2013). There were various unique diverse practices identified that involve children in the process food production, food preparation, food serving (Dinning), food consumption. The associated values are togetherness, sharing and hard work.

Regarding Safety and accident prevention in early childhood time, participant families believe that God has a plan and purpose for each person's life, and He guides and protects them through various means, such as angels, saints, prayers, sacraments, and the Holy Spirit. The community uses various Preventative measures for keeping children safe and apply various interventions during accidents.

With regard to Safety and Accident Prevention, the community engages in religious rituals and fosters a sense of togetherness as a proactive measure. They believe that God has a plan and purpose for each child's life, and He guides and protects them through various means, such as angels, saints, prayers, sacraments, and the Holy Spirit. Additionally, there are significant cultural practices and herbal medicines aimed at healing in the event of accidents. The findings show that families endorse healthy risk-taking behaviours. Despite the presence of some risks in household and children's environments they encourage and teach children to play and move safely despite the risks but they intervene as necessary. This perspective aligns with the

argument presented by O'Neill (2015). Nonetheless, children are consistently supervised by siblings, neighbours, or parents to mitigate accident risks.

The other important theme generated was regarding Early Learning and stimulation of children, the first finding, and show that supporting the learning and education of the child takes place in the child's everyday life. The child's learning in early childhood years takes place at home within the family through participation in different aspects of family life by taking different responsibilities and performing works that contribute to the wellbeing of the whole family. This early participation in work is in line with previous research findings of Sophia (2020) and Tatek (2013). Secondly, in this regard, their values regarding age and development respect the individuality of each child. Throughout the observation, the researcher witnessed that even though children are introduced work and are given responsibilities at early time, children are not forced responsibilities beyond their capacity. They accept that different children reach different developmental milestones and master certain capabilities in different ages and stages in early childhood years. This is also confirmed by the findings of (Abebe, 2019). Thirdly, findings also show that, there is a very rich culture of songs, games, dances, stories, puns (enkokilish), tongue twisters etc. The participant families and their children often engage in social spaces singing songs and dancing, playing different games and other activities which are naturally used in the everyday interactions and plays. The fifth findings reveal the community's disciplining method to be physical punishment. Accordingly, children get whooped, pinched and scolded in order to discourage wrong doings. Use of physical punishment to discipline children was also confirmed in a research by Menelik et al. (2022) conducted in preschool children in different parts of the country. And simultaneously, elders encourage proper behaviour and right doings by using encouragement words and gestures and through *Mirikat* (blessing). Furthermore, the findings also

show that the most anticipated characters in children are respect, obedience, humility, and self-control.

Also regarding language development the identified values and practices imply that Language development show that use of language is encouraged by mothers and the other members of family who communicate with the child naturally. Furthermore, children are exposed to proverbs, riddles, stories, puns and tongue twisters in their interaction and communication with the adults and young children in their communities both in the everyday communications and as plays with children/siblings.

Furthermore, the findings show that caring for the psychological wellbeing of children is expressed by makef,(Hugging) mesam,(kissing) Memerek,(blessing) mazel, (carrying children at the back), abrometegnats (co-sleeping). And the community naturally allow children to create attachments with extended families, neighbours and siblings. The bond of love and care created with multiple care providers is believed to assist the child to have a healthy psychological wellbeing. The finding on co sleeping also matches Belay D, (2007) who confirms in his study that the main reasons for co-sleeping are convenience, warmth, protection, bonding, and breastfeeding.

Children are cared by families and neighbours whenever needed. This finding affirms the findings of (Kassa, 2017), which asserts that the extended family provides a protective social environment for children to develop multiple attachments with others.

5.2 Conclusion

The findings of this research prove that there is rich indigenous knowledge embedded in the deep values and the unique early childhood care practices of participant families with North Shewa Amhara cultural background. The identified values and practices concerning the health, nutrition, cleanliness, safety, learning and stimulation of children reflect the world view of the community that is shaped by the historical, socio-cultural and religious factors.

- Accordingly, the communities' views and practices regarding early childhood care place strong emphasis on the relationships among people, the natural world, and spirituality. They are holistic, and relational.
- Based on the data generated and the analysis made we can conclude that people from North Shewa Amhara culture view the child as holistic beings connected to the family, community, and spirituality.
- The practices and values generated through this study confirm that the rituals, beliefs, the North Shewa Amhara support children's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development.
- Togetherness as a value is reflected in every aspect of the families' and children's life and is believed to support the proper development of the child.
- Respect, obedience, humility, and self-control are highly valued anticipated characters that parents wish and expect to see in their children. These values are trained and guided in all activities of children.
- Based on the analysis made from the extracted data it also appears reasonable to draw the conclusion that the community and families view children as a growing individuals who can contribute to the wellbeing of the family by taking on duties and responsibilities that

are appropriate to their capacity. They believe that including the child to contribute to household and livelihood tasks has two fold benefits; it helps to ease the life of the family and helps in supporting the holistic development of the child.

- Based on the findings of this research, it is also feasible to draw the conclusion that age is not a significant predictor of maturity and development. Instead, families expose their kids to varying tasks and duties according to each child's ability level. At any age, when a child learns to complete an activity on their own, their family inevitably give them more responsibility. For example, within the same family, some young children began their independent cattle guarding duties at age four, while other siblings began at age eight.

5.3 Recommendation

Applying indigenous knowledge in early childhood care will promote children's sense of identity, belonging, and wellbeing. According to Warin (2010), one's sense of identity is essential to their general psychological health because it allows them to take charge of their lives and manage their experiences. **Children, who have a solid sense of who they are, more likely succeed academically and socially. As a result, it is highly recommended to utilize indigenous knowledge and culture in supporting children's wellbeing and development.**

Early childhood programs can benefit from the different perspectives, values, and ways of knowing that the unique cultural viewpoints and practices offer. (Vang, 2010). And in order to learn about and incorporate indigenous perspectives and practices into their programs, early childhood professionals will benefit greatly from speaking with local indigenous families, children, groups and elders as well as utilizing authentic and respectful resources. This insures the application of culturally responsive and appropriate approaches to early childhood care that respect and value the uniqueness of the diverse communities that children come from.

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Appendix 1









Appendix 2

Semi Structured Deep Interview Questions

How do families practice care for their young children? And what are the values behind the practice?

1) *Family size?* *children* ___ *boys* ___ *age* _____ *girls* ___ *age* _____ *other family members if available* _____

2) *Parents info?*

Mother _____ *Age* ___ *education level* _____ *Occupation* _____

Father _____ *age* ___ *education level* _____ *Occupation* _____

3) *Other relevant info, if available*

1. How do you explain care in relation to your child's development and well-being?
2. What are some of the practices you perform in caring for your child?
3. Why do you use the mentioned practices?
4. How do you negotiate and coordinate care responsibilities with other family members?
5. How do you evaluate and reflect on your own care practices and their outcomes for your child?

Appendix 3

Semi Structured Interview Questions for Children

1. How do you spend your day?
2. How do you know the expectations of your family?
3. What are your roles as a child? What is expected of you?
4. How would your family react if you do things that contradict their expectation?
5. What is the role of family members regarding caring for you?
6. What is your role in the family?
7. What is your role in caring for yourself?
8. What is the role of neighbors and others in the community regarding caring for you?
9. What happens if you get sick?

Appendix 4

Observation Field Note

How is childhood practiced? (Closely observe the life of the child, observe practices: - examine the symbols: - languages, gestures, artefacts and rituals)

1. How is the physical need of the child met on daily basis?

a) How is **good health practiced and valued** in the family?

- What does the child's **nutrition** like? (What does he/she eat/drink?)
- Frequency of meal?
- What are his/her **cleaning/wash** routine like? Potty training, cleaning themselves?
- What kind of physical activities is the child engaged in on a daily basis? To support motor skill?
- The way they dressed up
- The activities they are engaged in other than play

b) How is safety and security practiced and valued?

- How the inside of the house is made safe for the children?
- How the external environment is kept safe and secured for children?

2. How is the socio-emotional/psychological need of the child met?

Children's Social Position

1. How do children participate in the social, economic and other life of the community?
What kind of activities, interactions and relationships do they have with others?
2. How do children learn about their culture, history and identity? What are the sources, methods and values of their education?

3. How do children express themselves creatively and emotionally? What are the forms, genres and meanings of their play, art and communication?
4. How do children cope with challenges, conflicts and changes in their environment? What are the resources, strategies and outcomes of their resilience?
 - a) What are the social aspects of the child's life like?
 - How does the child communicate with adults and peers in the community?
 - What is the role of the child in the social aspect of the community? (In what way does the child appear in social gatherings?)
 - What aspects of social life does the child involve in?
 - What are the available social spaces for children? (Holidays, Social Gatherings, Play grounds)
 - b) What are the emotional aspects of the child's life like?
 - What are the **attachment practices** of the families and parents?
 - How do families and community members express care and affection for the children?
 - How do families view **emotional health**?
 - What are the practices that relate to emotional care?
 - How is the child disciplined? (Reward and punishment aspects)
 - How do adults communicate with the child?
3. **How is the cognitive need of the child met on daily basis?**
 - What are the practices that support the cognitive development of the child?
 - What are the systems available to support the cognitive development of children?

