



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES (IPSS)**

**EXPLORING INDIVIDUAL'S LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FORGIVENESS IN  
ETHIOPIA AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR COMMUNITY PEACEBUILDING**

**By:**

**DAGNAW KEBEDE TEREFE**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

June, 2019

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Advisor: **Yonas Adaye Adeto (Ph.D.)**

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Approved by the board of examiners

Name	Signature	Date
Advisor: _____	_____	_____
Internal examiner: _____	_____	_____
External examiner: _____	_____	_____
Director of IPSS: _____	_____	_____

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of forgiveness of eight individuals by using Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological design which provides systematic steps that lead to an essential description of the experience. Techniques such as media and social network were used to identify participants who experienced forgiveness and purposive sampling along with criterion and snowballing strategies were employed for recruitment. This study aimed at exploring and understanding the essences of the experience of forgiveness through the accounts of participants (Moustakas, 1994). A semi-structured interview was conducted with one female and seven male offended individuals who experienced forgiveness. From the individuals accounts eight themes: Representation of the harm/hurt, paths to decide and grant forgiveness, refraining from thoughts and activities against granting forgiveness, forgiveness entailing reconciliation, love and established positive relationship, forgiveness as letting go off negative feelings and/or developing positive ones, individual capability differences in forgiveness, circumstances facilitating victims' capability to forgive and forgiveness is beneficial developed. By reflecting on the textural descriptions the structural descriptions of the experience of the phenomenon were constructed. The textural descriptions and structural descriptions integrated into a composite textural structural description of the experience of the phenomenon. Finally, this study resulted in five essences. And my study revealed that forgiving others is the offended individual's letting go of resentments with/ without directly communicating the transgressor(s) and this letting go of has ended the potential revenge and its destructive, cyclical effects. And this result has an implication to build peace in the community.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Personally, I have seen and heard that disagreements started in small (e.g. criticizing, just joking, things done for just laughing and entertaining etc.) and escalated in to physical fight to using of sharp materials and extended to group level; even things just done for good are changed in to conflicts. And I heard individuals who have been regretted on their reactions which caused such unintended escalation. The ultimate goal of peace and conflict studies is to transform differences in to constructive way, to prevent, if not to reduce, the damage of disagreements through nonviolent means.

#### 1.1. Background of the study

*I believe we need to be free from the retribution system (e.g. Dem-melash)... transferred to us from generation to generation. At the country level, it is known where holding grudges takes us. Unless it is through reconciliation and forgiveness, using resentment and revenge is endless, participant1.*

Studies showed the escalation of personal and local conflicts into ethnic level, but these studies did not come up with what transformation mechanism helped to transform the conflicts into constructive outcomes (Amare, 2013). Massey (2009) described that disagreements started in small between or among individuals spread outwardly and impacting others. This “ripple effect” endures over time and across generations. German psychiatrist Albrecht Mahr suggested that large group issues are deeply interconnected with individual real people (Cohen, 2009).

Worldwide, Paloutzian & Kalayjian (2009) see the continuity of violent outbreaks between individuals and groups. Experiencing transgression is inevitable across human conditions (Cohen, 2009; McCullough, 2001; Norman, 2017). Individuals suffer from human rights violations, organizational bullying, and political violence by leaders (Campbell, 2017). There is conflict whenever and everywhere in a society and it deepens and divided the society if not rectified (Enright, 2016). Unresolved injustices

committed in one generation results in the next generation to drawn into the fight (Cohen, 2009). Worthington, et al., (2015) underscored that conflict is one feature of people in Africa. Past hostilities gripped African people in the present (Borris, 2003). Countries in the Horn of Africa are unable to extricate from the vicious cycle of different forms of conflicts (Mulugeta, 2015).

Ethiopia stands at the crossings: either to go to trouble through an escalation of internal strife along with other problems or to step forward to be the exemplar for Africans (Levine, 2008). Ethiopia is known for intermittent civil conflicts (Bekalu, 2017). “Abyssinians are very easily provoked to anger; but they are as easily reconciled to each other” (Gobat, 1834; as cited in Levine, 2008: 116). For example, a study by Anteneh (2013) showed that people in the Kewot and Semurobi woreda of the State of Amhara and Afar respectively are characterized by hostility and revenge of each other based on ethnic lines and they sustained a culture of violence with each other. Similarly a study by Eneyew (2013) in the case of Borena, Ethiopia revealed that revenge shared greater percentage among other crimes identified in the study area. He described that the victim or his/her family purchase firearms to take revenge due to the injury and as a result, there is a perpetrator-victim cycle. For the sake of community protection from a neighborhood community, people in Borena obliged to have firearms and train continuously to shoot (Eneyew, 2013).

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed” (UNESCO Constitution, n.d.). Peaceful and violent actions are outcomes of individuals (Paloutzian & Kalayjian, 2009). Based on his study on the “Awra Amba community”, Eskinder (2013) argued human beings can be the authors of peace. His result showed that the Awra Amba community gives attention even to the slightest disagreement so that they deal it properly and keep the community’s internal peace.

We need certain new ways of thinking and acting about old problems in order to survive in this 21st century (Clement, 1997). He emphasized the need for dialogue; for example, a dialogue between persons locked into cultures of violence and persons working to build cultures of peace, between learned and unlearned and between ancient and modern wisdom.

Understanding and practicing forgiveness truly enable to view the world newly (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994). Forgiveness is a universal necessity for healthy civil societies and mutual improvement (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009). As we humans make mistakes: Ke-sew sihetet/

Ke-beret zeget/ Aytefam, forgiveness is essential for the survival of the society (Levine, 2008). The Awra Amba community in Ethiopia value nonviolent responses in resolving disagreements which close the room for deadly fights and neutralize negative attitudes (Eskinder, 2013).

Campbell (2017) and Paloutzian & Kalayjian (2009) indicated forgiveness and reconciliation as key topics for long term peace and stability. Managing conflict through forgiveness results in peace while avoids escalation and war (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). They showed the importance of the self in the peace process even at the group level when the victim is from the collectivist culture. Akhtar (2015) and Barker (2016) stated the importance of forgiveness in ending the chains of violence and hatred born from injustice and thereby it brings love, peace and compassion into the world. Forgiveness restores positive social relations which are a vital human need (Call, 2009; Enright, 2016; Lijo, 2018; McCullough, 2000; McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2007). Forgiveness and reconciliation reunify individuals whose relationship has been broken and play a role in healing persons, communities, and the social fabric (Massey, 2009). Mokhtar (2000) concluded that forgiveness is part and parcel of human existence. A work by Enright & the Human Study Development Group (1994, 1996) revealed the significance to expose the early adolescents for such concepts as unconditionality, inherent equality and forgiveness. By naming examples of countries in Africa where interpersonal, inter-ethnic hostilities and multi-racial conflicts have been widespread, Nwoye (2009) indicated the significance of forgiveness in decreasing interpersonal conflict and hostility.

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

In order to survive and make resilient communities in this 21<sup>st</sup> century certain new ways of thinking and acting about old problems is needed (Clements, 1997). “New ways of viewing the world emerge as one truly understands and practices forgiveness” (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994:78).

Having resentment in the heart one would not dialogue, negotiate and reconcile with another who caused injustice. So forgiveness is the only effective way to cure the illness of such resentment (Enright, 2016). One of the reasons for civil wars in many countries is not learning how to forgive (Borris, 2003). In the community concerned with human development, together with justice, forgiveness is a construct that deserves attention at the personal and societal level (Enright & the Human Development Study

Group, 1994; Massey, 2009). Learning forgiveness is an extraordinary healing force that brings peace and wholeness (Barker, 2016).

Understanding of what forgiveness is and is not is an essential step in moving forward into forgiveness (Norman, 2017). Forgiveness is perceived as a weakness within families and within ethnic conflicts as well as on national levels and this perception is a misunderstanding about genuine forgiveness which is neither a license for abuse nor a call to forget an offense per se (Call, 2009). People rebel to forgiveness due to such a culture which links strength with fighting and revenge, whereas weak with forgiveness and/ or they do not know how to forgive (Barker, 2016). However, Mahatma Gandhi asserted that “the weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong” (American Psychological Association, 2006:5). Exploring the concept of forgiveness is important to end the cycle of violence and revenge (Barker, 2016; Borris, 2003). The first step towards forgiveness is having information that forgiveness exists, is an option for everyone and learning how to apply forgiveness (Oliver, 2013). A study by Diebel (2012), Exline, Worthington, Hill & McCullough (2003) and Lijo (2018) revealed the need for having a clear understanding of forgiveness and of the processes involved to forgive before practicing it on the ground. Paloutzian and Kalayjian (2009) indicated the need for expanding human consciousness about forgiveness and reconciliation to establish lasting peace.

Sesay (2016) stated the practice of “communal self-help” or “Do-it-Yourself” (DIY) in many communities in Africa and some DIY tasks need assistance from others (e.g. family member(s) or neighbor(s)) to perform the task successfully.

Ethiopia is known for its intermittent civil conflicts (Bekalu, 2017). Levine (2008) stated the presence of much grudges in the society in Ethiopia that need discussion in good spirit. There is a saying, for example, that clearly indicate the holding of grudges, ሸዋ ዓመት ባለሙሉ በአንድ ቀን ይሙላል, literally, people in Shewa ruminate the resentment a year or above and relieve it one day by revenging. Eneyew (2013) described the vicious cycle of revenge as “perpetrator-victim cycle” in his study area: Borena, Ethiopia. Contrary to this, the Awra Amba community believes in non-violence and practiced it in resolving disagreements and therefore they maintain peace by closing the room for disastrous clashes and by reducing hatred (Eskinder, 2013). As we humans make mistakes: Ke-sew sihetet/ Ke-beret zeget/ Aytetfam, forgiveness is essential (Levine, 2008). He stated that almost in all cultures in Ethiopia persons exhibited communal concerns such as mutual respect, effective conflict resolution, and public problem-

solving and highlighted forgiveness actions by past Ethiopian rulers towards their enemies just to discourage revenge. In his study of indigenous law and justice systems in Ethiopia so far አብዮልፈሪታህ (2010 Ethiopian calendar/E.C) found no culture without alternative justice systems and one of such systems, indirectly or directly, is facilitating forgiveness (translated). He has no doubt that most solutions for the public, government and a country, Ethiopia are found in indigenous laws and justice systems (translated). አብዮልፈሪታህ (2010 E.C) underlined the need to study indigenous wisdom in order to find satisfactory solutions for questions regarding public, government and country affairs (translated). Contrary to the Amharic old saying "Ye-wegga biresa Ye-tewegga ayresa, while the attacker may forget the attacked one forgets not ", Levine (2008:118) said, "there can never be peace without bringing in forgiveness".

In the course "theories of peace and security", I was assigned to present on Nelson Mandela's "very brief biography and key ideas of peace". When I read Mandela's autobiography entitled "Long Walk to Freedom" and facts about him from the website his "genuine forgiveness" to apartheid leaders has impressed me. Before I came across his autobiography and facts on a website, I have never ever known the qualities of Nelson Mandela except for his presidency of South Africa. I have found Mandela's forgiveness is the starting point towards peace, and democracy in South Africa (Mandela, 1995). This time onwards the idea of forgiveness captured my attention.

According to Worthington et al's (2015) forgiveness research in Africa between 1996 and 2014, Ethiopia is one where no research has taken place on forgiveness. They showed the need to conduct research on forgiveness in Africa to counterbalance the continuing unrest. And hence, to my knowledge, no research has done on the phenomenon of forgiveness in Ethiopia except a work by Levine (2008) entitled "The Promise of Ethiopia: Public Action; Civic Forgiveness; Creative Power".

The researcher have no understanding about forgiveness; just I have watched a spiritual film of Jesus Christ's forgiveness. And I have heard the praying and teachings of forgiveness in my religion and I just pray አባታችን ሆይ... "በደላችንን ይቅር በልን እኛም የበደሉንን ይቅር እንደምል", "Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us" (Matt. 6:12) without internalizing. The culture where I grew up and live in is silent about forgiveness but accepts retribution, Dem-melash (ደም ጠጥሽ) which is contrary to the religious aspect. Such opposite tendencies make forgiveness difficult to understand, define and practice when a real problem occurred between individuals or groups.

Furthermore I have never ever heard the word “forgiveness” in any formal class that I have attended and in the media until around the mid of 2018 when the newly elected Prime Minister Dr. Abyi Ahmed preaches forgiveness, lets surpass the problems by forgiving each other in different podium and as a result different governmental and non- governmental medias are talking about just “let us forgive each other”. And then I heard individuals who claimed that they have forgiven but without describing what it is and how it is experienced. However, forgiveness is “not about words or thoughts, ideas or beliefs, it must be felt, experienced and understood from within” (Oliver, 2013:31). Reconciliation and forgiveness found everywhere; however we overlooked such ordinary, but essential things to enduring relationships and therefore it becomes difficult to understand (Massey, 2009). Thus by using a transcendental phenomenological approach design, this research explored the ascribed meaning of the phenomenon “forgiveness” from the viewpoint of the individuals’ lived experience.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological research was to explore and understand the meanings that eight individuals ascribe to their lived experiences of forgiveness at their home and workplace. The aim of the study was to describe the essences or general meanings of individuals lived experiences of forgiveness.

### **1.4. Research questions**

#### **1.4.1. Main question**

What is the meaning individuals ascribe to their lived experiences of forgiveness?

#### **1.4.2. Specific questions**

What does it mean to forgive?

How did/do individuals experience their forgiveness?

What benefits individuals’ gained from their experiences of forgiveness?

What is the implication of individuals’ forgiveness for community peacebuilding?

### **1.5. Scope of the study**

The study is limited to explore and describe individuals lived experiences of forgiveness in Ethiopia. The research participants were limited to individuals living in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, or the State of Amhara. The study is restricted to investigate individuals who have experienced forgiveness in relation to the harm they faced from an individual or a group, a governmental body. The focus is on interpersonal forgiveness rather than intergroup forgiveness.

### **1.6. Significance of the study**

This study has brought an insight into the meaning of forgiveness and how it is experienced from the view of individuals experiencing it. Essences enrich and clarify our knowledge and experience of everyday situations, events and relationships (Moustakas, 1994). And I hope the readers of this research will understand and learn what forgiveness is through the words participants described their experiences of forgiveness and will benefit from using it in their effort to resolve any disagreement non-violently, heal their wounds and enhance their relationships with others. I hoped that this study will pave the way to understand, learn and practice forgiveness.

Understandings gained from phenomenological research enabled the establishment of more humane workplace practices and policies (Bliss, 2016). Thus all people who will read this study are going to benefit in developing the practice of forgiveness in the place where they live and work so that they can transform the disagreements into constructive way and build peace in the community.

Findings of phenomenological study will serve as the basis for further research and reflection (Moustakas, 1994). So this study can serve as a reference material for those interested in conducting further study on forgiveness using the same approach or a different approach. Phenomenological research results are helpful for groups like therapists, teachers, policy makers etc. (Creswell, 2013). This research may be a springboard for scholars and teachers working in different fields generally and for peace and security studies specifically to incorporate forgiveness in their fields and develop the knowledge comprehensively so that they used to teach their students and clients to restore, maintain and enhance relationships.



Furthermore, this study has provided the researcher to understand forgiveness from the words of the participants and has equipped to practice it as forgiveness is vital to go over the locked cultures of revenge where I live in and to attend “people working to build cultures of peace”.

### **1.7. Ethical consideration**

Since this research was primarily based on interview, I tried my best to abide by “ethical issues apparent during data collection, and analysis and dissemination of qualitative report” (Cresswell, 2007).

The researcher contacted each participant by telephone or in person to get voluntary and informed consent. All study participants were given the specifics of the research verbally. The participants received a letter of Addis Ababa University institute for peace and security studies in order to avoid deception about the nature of the study. I assured to the participants that the statements they give me never be used out of this research purpose. Participants were asked of how the data was to be recorded and accordingly four of the participants did not want audiotaping of the interview, instead they were more interested in taking notes.

And for the recorded interviewee I vowed to them that the audiotaped data is going to be erased right after this study completion. In addition, I mentioned the right of participants to ask any question and voluntarily quit the interview at any time. I ensured participants confidentiality using the word ‘participant’ with the number ‘1-8’; e.g. participant1, participant2.

Epoche or bracketing is another ethical issue in phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). I had never shared my personal knowledge gained from literature or experience of forgiveness during the interview.

- ✓ Plagiarism: it is absolutely unethical and illegal in research to plagiarize (Kumar, 2014). To my knowledge all borrowed ideas and citations in this study properly acknowledged.
- ✓ The misrepresentation of data- changing its format, context or content- is both illegitimate and unethical (Kumar, 2014). To this end I was careful to present the textural description in the words of participants.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Broad search terms such as ‘forgiveness’, ‘interpersonal or group forgiveness’, forgiveness’ and ‘reconciliation’, ‘phenomenological methods on forgiveness’ as well as the reference sections of the already gained materials were used to search the literature review on the website. In addition to the general website Scencedirect.com and Academia.edu were searched. I used Addis Ababa university library to get the access. In addition I used Ethiopian police university college library to get access of published books.

In this literature review, I revised current research and conceptualizations of forgiveness including factors facilitating it and the benefits it brings to the victims, the offender, the relationship and the society. The review begins with the nature of conflicts and responses and definition of forgiveness.

#### 2.1. Nature of conflicts and responses

Writers (e.g. Campbell, 2017; Cohen, 2009; Norman, 2017) described the inevitability of transgressions within humans. Being offended or harmed by another person (a family, friend or stranger) is inevitable in life and the two classic, normal responses for such harm developed by people throughout history and across cultures are avoidance, avoiding contact with the offender and revenge, needing to harm the offender (McCullough, 2000 & 2001). Similarly Worthington and Scherer (2004) stated that people used unforgiveness- a combination of resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred, anger, and fear- as a response for a transgression they experienced. McCullough (2001) indicated the negative consequences these responses can have to the relationship and the society.

The Awra Amba community believes in non-violence responses and practiced it in resolving disagreements and as a result they maintain peace by closing the room for disastrous clashes and by reducing hatred (Eskinder, 2013).

Though religions advocate the constructiveness of forgiveness as a preventive and remedy for transgressions (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009; McCullough, 2001; Oliver, 2013) scientists have gave

attention to forgiveness as a response recently (McCullough, 2001). Forgiveness is one response (Worthington et al., 2015), is dependable treatment (Wade, Hoyt, Kidwell & Worthington, 2013) for a transgression. Forgiving a transgression reduces the motivation of avoidance and revenge (McCullough, 2001).

## **2.2. Definition of forgiveness**

McCullough (2000) indicated the continuity of debate on the conceptualization of forgiveness. Forgiveness has more than one meaning to victims and such different meanings have relevance for different circumstances (Paloutzian and Kalayjian, 2009). Akhtar (2015), Call (2009), and Massey and Abu-Baker (2009) described the existence of some difference in defining forgiveness. Researchers who studied forgiveness have used many hypothetical understandings of the concept (Worthington and Scherer, 2004). For example forgiveness is multidimensional, complex process (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012; Mokhtar, 2000; Paloutzian and Kalayjian, 2009); involves cognitive, affective and behavioral (Diebel, 2012; Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994; Norman, 2017), motivational (McCullough, 2000, 2001; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997), decisional (DiBlasio, 1998; Worthington and Scherer, 2004), emotional (Worthington and Scherer, 2004), and intra and interpersonal (Akhtar, 2015; Cohen, 2009; Nwoye, 2009; Rutayisire, 2009; Worthington & Cowden, 2017) aspects.

Worthington and Scherer (2004) conceptualized forgiveness as the placement of positive emotions (e.g. empathy, sympathy, kindness, or love) against the negative emotions towards a transgressor. They define two types of forgiveness: decisional and emotional, which can be interdependent or independent. Forgiveness is an unconditional gift given to an offender through substitution of negative affect, cognition and behavior by positive ones (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994; 1996). The promotion of forgiveness is not simply letting go of negative thoughts and feelings but also includes moving toward more positive, optimal functioning (Call, 2009; Paloutzian, 2009; Wade et al., 2013). Forgiveness is “a process of decreasing (repetitive) negative thoughts, actions and feelings such as vengefulness, enmity and anger, and replacing them with more positive thoughts, actions and feelings in the form of compassion and warmth” (Akhtar, 2015:130). However, he indicated the difference in the development of positive emotions towards the offender; that is some participant understood forgiveness as entailing only reduction of negative affect.

McCullough et al., (1997) define interpersonal forgiving as the set of motivational changes whereby the offended individual becomes less motivated to revenge the offender, to distance from the offender, and more motivated by reconciliation and goodwill for the offender.

Forgiveness is the positive ability to stay at peace when a person is unable to get what he/she wants (Luskin, 2006). Forgiveness is the choice to regain one's life and energy to live fully and freely in the present moment (Barker, 2016). It is one of a victim's responses to the experience of injustice with goodness rather than retribution (Exline et al., 2003; Lijo, 2018; Worthington et al, 2015).

### **2.2.1. Intrapersonal vs. interpersonal process of forgiveness**

Forgiveness is totally intrapersonal, inner decision and processes requiring no action from the offender (Avruch, 2010). A study by Mokhtar (2000) revealed that forgiving an offender is a process that starts with the forgiver's perception of being injured by another and ends in, psychological rather than face-to-face, reconciliation.

Akhtar (2015) and Worthington & Cowden (2017) stated the process of intra and interpersonal forgiveness. Nwoye (2009) argued that in addition to the intrapersonal nature of forgiveness process it is also transactional whereby both the person doing the forgiving and the person being forgiven as well as a witnessing community (e.g. facilitators) present and this form of interpersonal forgiveness is mature forgiveness which is achieved in dialogue. The study is intended to show the interpersonal process of forgiveness in African context. He also inferred that forgiving others enable the forgiver to become more positive (feelingly, motivationally, behaviorally) and less negative towards the transgressor. Related to Nwoye's (2009) argument, Paloutzian (2009) stated that the complete sense of forgiveness require interpersonal or group forgiveness, the active participation of both the victim and offender(s), whereas a totally intrapersonal forgiveness may be psychologically incomplete. This interpersonal transaction includes personal decision and public commitment to behave in a way that reduces retaliation (Paloutzian, 2009).

Generally the difference of meaning is in relation to whether forgiveness is intrapersonal and/or interpersonal process, whether it is only releasing the negative attitudes and refraining from negative behaviors and/or it is also developing positive attitudes and behaviors. And such difference is based on cultural difference and nature of the relationship. Regardless of such differences "forgiveness occurs

with the victim's full recognition that he or she deserved better treatment", and this recognition is one reason why Mahatma Gandhi contended that "the weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong" (American Psychological Association, 2006:5).

### **2.2.2. Motivational conceptualization of Forgiveness**

McCullough (2000) indicated that his theoretical and empirical research on forgiveness far has been based on the assumption that forgiving is motivational and pro-social. Call (2009) thought that considering forgiveness as a pro-social change is important to govern our behavioral norms.

#### **2.2.2.1. Forgiveness as pro-social motivational change**

"He who refuses to forgive breaks the bridge over which he too must cross" (Confucius, cited in Barker, 2016: 25)

Persons experience basic emotional responses (e.g. avoidance and revenge) when they faced unpleasant interpersonal event (McCullough, 2000). According to him forgiveness is created by the concert work of avoidance and revenge motivation with benevolence motivation. Forgiveness is a motivation of benevolence towards the offender (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994). The offended individual's motivation to discontinue the perception to avoid the offender and/or seek revenge and to continue constructive relationship with the offender indicates that forgiveness is not a motivation per se, but a pro-social change in one's motivation (McCullough, 2000).

According to McCullough (2000, 2001) the phenomenon forgiveness is a pro-social motivational change that people become more motivated to behave in a way that keep and/ or increase the relationship with others. That is forgiving incapacitate the motivation of avoidance and revenge towards the transgressor; instead stimulate benevolent and pro-social, constructive motivations (Borris, 2003; McCullough, 2001). Forgiveness causes reconciliatory and inhibits retaliatory behavior (McCullough, 2000). By tackling retaliatory reactions in our society, forgiveness is an instrument for social change (Barker, 2016). Forgiveness as a social concept may end a cycle of revenge that may escalate if we insist upon justice (Enright, Knutson, Holter, Baskin & Knutson, 2007). Forgiveness is a process of replacing the negative thoughts, emotions and behaviors with more positive, prosocial responses towards a wrongdoer (Diebel, 2012; Lijo, 2018; Norman, 2017).

Forgiveness is carried out for the sake of both the victims own peace of mind and for others to restore and/ or establish a relationship with the offender (Paloutzian, 2009). Forgiveness is an act of the forgiver selected for self-respect and concern for others (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Barker (2016:22) stated forgiveness “involves deconstructing inter-generational narratives about injustice, inequality, blame and fault that are deeply embedded in our individual and collective psyches”.

### **2.2.3. What forgiveness is not?**

Those who promote forgiveness explained what forgiveness is and what it is not. Forgiveness is not reconciling with the offender (Avruch, 2010; Barker, 2016; Baskin & Enright, 2004; Borris, 2003; Chubbuck, 2010; Luskin, 2006; Wade et al, 2013); not forgetting the offence (Barker, 2016; Baskin & Enright, 2004; Chubbuck, 2010; Enright, 2016); not excusing unjust behavior (Barker, 2016; Baskin & Enright, 2004; Enright, 2016); not relinquishing legal punishment (Borris, 2003; Chubbuck, 2010)).

Forgiveness is not reconciliation as forgiveness is “intrapersonal experience” (Avruch, 2010; Borris, 2003; Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994), whereas reconciliation is two way process (Avruch, 2010; Borris, 2003). However, there is a difference among scholars on the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation that while some view reconciliation as an integral part of the forgiveness process others view it as an independent process (American Psychological Association, 2006). Worthington & Cowden (2017), for example, explained that forgiveness sometimes requires reconciliation, especially in Africa where persons may consider that forgiveness requires restoration of relationships.

### **2.3. Religion and Forgiveness**

Religions promote forgiveness (Worthington et al, 2015). Individuals are more likely to forgive if they believe that the wrongs of this life will be repaired in afterlife (Massey and Abu-Baker, 2009). For example, the Ethiopian inclination for forgiveness can be traced to religious traditions (Levine, 2008).

Many religions assume forgiveness as a source of human strength (McCullough, 2000). The teaching of forgiveness exists in all religions though the focus and ways of practicing it varies (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009; Oliver, 2013) and it is one of the most factors that help or hamper human relations

(Farhadian and Emmons, 2009). Forgiveness enables humans to live in harmony with their fellow humans beings in the community (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009).

Humans use prayer to communicate their issue with God (e.g, “Forgive us the wrongs that we have done, as we forgive the wrongs others have done us” (Matt. 6:12) or Allah (Allah is one who forgives (Qur’an 39:53, 2:286), yet believers are also told to forgive, “They avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive” (Qur’an 42:37)) and the empirical reality of religious forgiveness has to manifest in human relationships (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009). Religions advocate what is conducive for human relationships and forgiveness is one foundation for flourishing relation (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009).

“Although its origins are within the ancient religious traditions, forgiveness, through research and academic discourse has now taken its place within the positivist and humanistic traditions” (Enright, et al., 2006:11).

#### **2.4. Variables that influence people’s capability to forgive**

We can choose to see the world through the eyes of either anger, fear and stay trapped in hatred or forgiveness and live a life of inner peace (Borris, 2003). Individual differences in the time and conditions of choosing forgiveness exists (Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1994). It is possible to forgive at any time in any given situation (Barker, 2016), to forgive both minor & extreme transgressions (Norman, 2017).

Cognitive and emotional processes (such as Empathy, rumination and suppression), relationship qualities (such as closeness, commitment and satisfaction) and situational factors (such as apology) influence people’s capability to forgive (McCullough, 2000).

### **2.4.1. Humanity and Empathy**

Enright et al (2007) and Enright & the human study development group (1994) argued that abstract identity that human beings are worth generates forgiveness. Forgiveness originates when perpetrators and victims along with their families recognize each other as full members of the human community (Cohen, 2009). Beliefs to benefit others facilitate forgiveness (Akhtar, 2015).

Eskinder (2013) expressed that the Awra Amba community believes in ‘humanist philosophy’. His study revealed that everyone is treated as equal merely being a human. Believing in humanity is the pillar for all values in the Awra Amba community and it causes them to follow, for example, nonviolent conflict resolution techniques as a principle (Eskinder, 2013).

Empathy is helpful in facilitating forgiving (Akhtar, 2105; McCullough et al, 1997; McCullough, 2000; Norman, 2017). Empathy is a state of understanding the feeling of the other party (Akhtar, 2105; McCullough, 2000).

### **2.4.2. Rumination and suppression**

Avoiding rumination by identifying the negative ruminative thought and replacing them with positive ones is one of key step in forgiveness process (Norman, 2017). Rumination of the hurt repeatedly prevents forgiveness (Akhtar, 2015; McCullough, 2000). Thinking deeply about the offence and trying to inhibit those thinking stimulates high level of avoidance and revenge (McCullough, 2000). Rumination causes unforgiveness (Worthington and Scherer, 2004).

### **2.4.3. Closeness, commitment and satisfaction**

Forgiving is more likely in relationships characterized by closeness, commitment and satisfaction (McCullough, 2000; McCullough et al., 2007), with significant others (a friend or family member) (Mokhtar, 2000). Respectful self and other evaluation, constructively taking the roles of the others, and interactions facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation (Massey and Abu-Baker, 2009).

### **2.4.4. Amends**

Apology is helpful for forgiveness, but not a necessary condition (LaMar, 2009). According to Paloutzian (2009) there is some forgiveness without the offender’s confession of the wrong. “A victim is



more likely to forgive to a greater degree if the offender admits to having committed the crime, confesses, shows remorse, asks for forgiveness, and makes amends” (Paloutzian, 2009:79). He also stated that the implementation of forgiveness in “some African cultures involve group processes whereby the offender is expected to make amends” (:77) and a victim may need restitution. The more discussions occurred between the victim and offender (s) the more forgiveness is possible (Paloutzian, 2009).

#### **2.4.5. Accept responsibility**

Refuse to accept responsibility for one’s own wrongdoings can lead to lack of remorse and to damaged relationship (Ducommun-Nagy, 2009). The offended persons taking responsibility for their own faults enabled them to forgive (Akhtar, 2015).

#### **2.4.6. Consequence of actions**

Believing that one’s negative or positive intents and action has a congruent positive or negative consequence facilitates forgiveness (Akhtar, 2015).

#### **2.4.7. Third parties**

The presence of community norms that support forgiveness make forgiveness effective (LaMar, 2009). Cohen (2009) found indigenous cultures as sources of trans-generational forgiveness. He explained that community-based forgiveness process involve the offender and victim with their immediate and extended families, as well as a council of trusted elders to crystalize forgiveness and this process integrates words (e.g. expressing remorse) and deeds (e.g. offering restitution) of the offender and accepting and swearing of the offended not to revenge (Cohen, 2009).

Third parties promote repentance and apology of the offender and forgiveness on the part of the offended (Nwoye, 2009) and accordingly the process of forgiveness has been well-done. And in African context, depending on the offence, simply expressing apology without reparation act is not accepted as enough to influence forgiveness (Nwoye, 2009). In his experience there are signs of healed relationships among participants such as hugs to one another after the conference. “Peoples of integrity” (Inyangamugayo) in the Gacaca assembly in Rwanda help the opposing parties along with their families together and create enabling environment for true reconciliation (Rutayisire, 2009).

Amare (2013) concluded that the conflict transformation process by Community elders and religious leaders involve the participation of conflicting parties to solve the matters of their own via win-win strategy and this process healed the deep-rooted causes of the conflict. However, pressuring victims to forgive and reconcile with offenders may not be genuine and perhaps even psychologically hurtful (Avruch, 2010).

## **2.5. Models of forgiveness**

### **2.5.1. Decision based models of forgiveness**

“Forgiveness is a reasoned decision! It is only when you choose to let go of your right to hate that it becomes easy to forgive your enemies and to live with them at peace” (Rutayisire, 2009: 186). DiBlasio (1998:78) defined “Decision-based forgiveness as the cognitive letting go of resentment and bitterness, and need for vengeance. However, it is not always the end to emotional pain and hurt”. Decisional forgiveness is a behavioral intention statement of the offended to behave like the pre-transgression time toward the transgressor (Worthington and Scherer, 2004).

### **2.5.2. Process based models of forgiveness**

Forgiveness is a learnable skill (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009). Forgiveness is not an overnight work rather it is a multilevel process (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012). The process model integrates the cognitive, affective and behavioral responses of forgiveness (Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1994; 1996).

Baskin and Enright (2004) suggest the use of process based models of forgiveness in both individual and group interventions so that the person can fully forgive a deep injustice. Both spiritual and nonspiritual based forgiveness interventions are effective in respect to mental health (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009). They stated the process model of forgiveness training results in an increased willingness to forgive and in reduced grievances or hurts (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009).

## **2.6. Benefits of forgiveness**

*“Sustaining anger, resentment and vengefulness is similar to the voluntary ingestion of a poison” (Norman, 2017:47).*

Forgiveness has personal and social benefits (LaMar, 2009). It increases human worth and make humans to live autonomously (Massey and Abu-Baker, 2009). It is important for individual lives and for the building of one’s nation (Rutayisire, 2009). Forgiveness is required for healthy civil societies and mutual enhancement (Farhadian and Emmons, 2009).

### **2.6.1. Forgiveness and the consequence of resentment**

Having resentment in the heart one would not dialogue, negotiate and reconcile with another who caused injustice. So forgiveness is the only effective way to cure the illness of such resentment (Enright, 2016). Forgiveness reduces negative affect (e.g. animosity, bitterness) and develops positive affects (e.g. peace, joy, love, hope, freedom, happy, uplifted, and felt normal) (Akhtar, 2015). It ends the destructive cycle of suffering, anger, ethnic violence, conflict, and restores peace, and enables us to move forward in our life (Barker, 2016; Borris, 2003; Norman, 2017). Forgiveness can decrease upsetting responses of wrongdoings done on us (Abid & Sultan, 2015; Norman, 2017). Chubbuck (2010) revealed the role of forgiveness to end injustice.

### **2.6.2. Forgiveness and relationship**

Forgiveness has implications on long-term and short term interaction of the victim, offender and the society (Exline et al., 2003; Fincham, et al., 2006; Massey and Abu-Baker, 2009). It enabled the forgiver to work together with the being forgiven (Akhtar, 2015). It is useful to be a better human being (accepting, loving, caring, and value people) and to live in peace and harmony with oneself and others as well as developing meaning in life (Akhtar, 2015; Oliver, 2013). Forgiveness reestablishes peace between self and other and valuing this relational peace contributed to a sense of community as well as gives meaning in life (Mokhtar, 2000). Forgiveness and reconciliation are essential and maintain positive relationship, reconstruct peace and promote security within and among individuals and social systems and thereby inextricably beneficial to the development of personal to societal level (Massey, 2009). Paloutzian and Kalayjian (2009) indicated the need of expanding human consciousness about forgiveness and reconciliation to establish lasting peace. Forgiveness and reconciliation reunify

individuals whose relationship has been broken (Massey, 2009). Forgiveness serves as a springboard to see new reality in a relationship (DiBlasio, 1998). It maintains and restores positive social relations which are a vital human need (Call, 2009; Enright, 2016; Lijo, 2018; McCullough, 2000; McCullough et al., 2007). Forgiveness is the first and necessary part for (Avruch, 2010), a pillar for (Rutayisire, 2009), consolidate and finalize (Massey, 2009) reconciliation. It supports reconciliation and democracy by enabling conflicting parties to envision a common bright future (Ben-Porath, 2005).

### **2.6.3. Forgiveness and health**

Forgiveness has healing outcomes in persons and communities (Barker, 2016; Massey, 2009; Rutayisire, 2009). It is an important construct for health, well-being and human relations (Akhtar, 2015; LaMar, 2009; McCullough, 2001; Worthington and Scherer, 2004). Forgiveness is the ability to function well in any area of life and are essential factor in individual mental health (Abid & Sultan, 2015). psychological well-being and distress improved when people forgiveness becomes higher (Diebel, 2012; Lijo, 2018; McCullough et al., 2007; Luskin, 2006). Forgiveness is an approach to get-out of perceiving self as victim, to reduce anger and restore emotional health (Borris, 2003; Enright et al., 2006; Exline et al., 2003). It heals the victim emotionally and physically as well as widening our moral compass (Borris, 2003; Norman, 2017). Norman (2017) showed the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy for both victims and offenders in dealing with deep wounds, in decreasing bitterness and resentment while increasing peace, meaning and move forward as well as improves wide-ranging functioning.

Forgiveness is one coping strategy used by people to deal with a transgression (Worthington and Scherer, 2004). Forgiveness caused “feelings of peace, contentment, joy, calmness, freedom, confidence, vitality and autonomy” (Akhtar, 2015: 243).

### **2.6.4. Unforgiveness and health**

In contrary to forgiveness, Worthington and Scherer (2004) hypothesized that unforgiveness produces ill health. Not forgiving causes a person to “experience negative emotions such as resentment, bitterness, hatred, hostility, residual anger, and fear”, thereby may lead to “individual and social dysfunctioning and psychological discomfort” (Lijo, 2018:3) and diminished well-being (Akhtar, 2015; Chubbuck, 2010). The carrying of grudges and anger has devastating effect on our health; however learning to forgive increases our well-being and increased hope (Barker, 2016).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Methodology is the way to understand the assumptions underlying various methods and techniques used to solve the research problem (Khotari, 2004). Methodologically this study adopted qualitative research approach. Research approaches, research designs, and research methods provide info in a sequential way from broad constructions of research to the narrow procedures of methods to conduct a study (Creswell, 2014).

#### **3.1. Qualitative research approaches**

Qualitative research is one approach to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers try to identify the complex interaction of factors in any situation (Creswell, 2007). If a concept or phenomenon needs to be explored and to understand the context (home, family or work) in which participants address the issue, it merits qualitative approach and this approach offer techniques for obtaining in-depth response about what people think, feel and do about ongoing social processes (Creswell, 2007 & 2013).

The “research approach” is the connection of philosophical worldviews, research designs, and research methods (Creswell, 2014). He stated, for example, qualitative approach typically uses social constructivist view which in turn manifested in phenomenological research design. To this end I selected the social constructivist view.

##### **3.1.1. Social Constructivism worldview**

According to Creswell (2013 & 2014) social constructivism is about to understand the varied and multiple meanings of individual experiences, and meanings socially and historically constructed; and individuals have subjective meanings about objects or things from their experience. Constructivist researchers often address the "processes" of interaction among individuals and the goal of the research relies on the participants view and looks for the complexity of views; and as such this world view at

micro level manifested in phenomenological research design (Creswell, 2007, 2014). Yüksel & Yıldırım (2015) indicated the connection of phenomenological research with constructivist view. The undertaking of phenomenology is more of constructivist worldview (Bliss, 2016; Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Thus, as this study is to explore and understand the individual's lived experiences of forgiveness I adopted social constructivism knowledge claim and phenomenological research design. Accordingly I believed that data are contained in individuals who have forgiven others and thus I engaged with the participants to collect data and relied on their experiential meaning of forgiveness.

### **3.1.2. Phenomenological research design**

Research designs are procedures of inquiry within each approach that provide specific direction for procedures conducting a study, especially focusing on data collection, analysis, and report writing (Cresswell, 2014). Among the five designs in qualitative approach offered by Cresswell (2013 & 2014) I adopted phenomenological design as its focus is "people's experiences of a phenomenon" (Bliss, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Groenewald, 2004). Mokhtar (2000) recommended investigating the lived experiences of forgiveness which lends itself absolutely to phenomenological research. For example Bryant (2019), Fanner (2004) and Mokhtar (2000) were used phenomenological study of individuals lived experiences of forgiveness. "A researcher using a phenomenological study assumes that participants will share their experiences honestly" (Patton, 2002; as cited in Bryant, 2019:10).

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was a great thinker in his phenomenological philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Eagleton, 1996). Husserl's 'phenomenology' originated from his interest to establish certainty of a thing based on the 'pure phenomena' appeared in mind (Eagleton, 1996:48), appeared in consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). For Husserl Phenomenology is a 'science of science' used to study anything experientially and provides the basis to construct reliable knowledge (Eagleton, 1996; Moustakas, 1994). Beginning with "things themselves" phenomenology is the first method of knowledge that emerges from the pure or transcendental ego- imperative to uncover the meanings and essences of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology attempts to describe and understand how individuals construct meaning from the experience they have of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015).

Phenomenological research can be used in many fields as there are numerous things that individuals can consciously experience (e.g., phenomena such as emotions, decisions, plans, and activities) (Bliss,

2016). Phenomenology is an exploratory research design that would prevent the researcher biases towards the practice to be studied and thus the aim of phenomenological researchers are to describe the phenomenon accurately based on the facts of the participants (Groenewald, 2004). The core of this design is inquiring and describing people's daily experiences in order to learn their common sense understanding and the meaning they have to their experiences (Bliss, 2016).

### **3.1.2.1. Key concepts of phenomenology**

The core of phenomenological research is "Husserl's call to study the conscious lived experience of people and developing descriptions of the essence" (Bliss, 2016: 16). Creswell (2007) put that the common grounds of phenomenology is that it is the study of the conscious lived experiences of individuals (Van Manen, 1990), and the very nature or essence of these conscious lived experiences are described, not explained or analyzed (Moustakas, 1994).

The key concepts in phenomenology, among others, include Lived experience, intentionality, epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and essence (Bliss, 2016; Eagleton, 1996; Moustakas, 1994)

#### **A. Lived experience**

Phenomenological studies concerned with lived experience which is meaningful and significant to the phenomenon (Creswell 2007; Moustakas 1994). Lived experience is all about how we react to the space/places where we in, how we experience time (past, present and future), how we experience intersubjective relationship (e.g researcher and participant; participants relationship with others) and how we react bodily/physically the spaces or others (e.g. noticing and reacting to nonverbal clues) (Bliss, 2016).

#### **B. Intentionality**

Intentionality, for Husserl (1931), is related to the acts of consciousness (Bliss, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality is acting deliberately, doing something thoughtfully (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). Everything not operating within our consciousness must be excluded carefully; and we have to begin to treat reality in the phenomenon appeared in our consciousness (Eagleton, 1996, Moustakas, 1994). The meaning of a phenomenon relies on our consciousness (Bliss, 2016, Moustakas 1994). In this study the

researcher assumed that individual's experiences of forgiveness is an intentional act that relied on the individual's consciousness.

### **C. Epoché**

Moustakas focuses on epoche (bracketing) in which a researcher reserve his/her experiences, as much as possible, to bring a fresh, new view towards a phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013). Epoche or bracketing means all past knowledge acquired from other than the immediate lived experiences of a phenomenon under exploration and personal experiences with the phenomenon put aside (Eagleton, 1996). It is taking of actions by a researcher not to let her/his existing body of knowledge to interfere in determining the meaning of a selected experience in conducting phenomenological research so that she/he can see the participants' experiences of a phenomenon (Bliss, 2016).

Epoche is a process to fully concentrate on the participants accounts without coloring it with a researcher's own habits of thinking, feeling and seeing (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). For example Creswell applied epoch by disconnecting his memory of 30 years personal and professional mentoring experiences and fully concentrate on the participants' presentation to explore the effects of mentoring. Epoché permits a researcher to be free from bias starting from interview to the end of data explication (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). In regarding to the epoche process in this study I did not used any knowledge gained from the literature when I interviewed the participants and analyzed the statements of their forgiveness experiences as it was presented.

### **D. Phenomenological Reduction**

Transcendental-phenomenological reduction is a process in which each experience considered in its singularity, a phenomenon perceived and described newly by removing statements that are repetitive, beyond the scope, and vague and composite textural description is constructed (Moustakas, 1994). To describe the general features of the phenomenon, a researcher must remove all elements beyond conscious experience (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). For them phenomenological reduction is about cleaning the raw data. They, for example, eliminated the participant talk about social media but not directly related to education.



## **E. Imaginative Variation**

Imaginative variation process follows phenomenological reduction and depends purely on researchers' imagination rather than empirical data (Moustakas, 1994). This process is used to develop structural themes, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced (Moustakas, 1994).

## **F. Essence**

Essence is the universal/common aspect of participant's experiences of the phenomenon. It is the quality/feature of a phenomenon that makes the phenomenon what it is (Bliss, 2016). The focus of phenomenologists is to describe the participants' common experience/ very nature of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The essential structure of the phenomenon is the result of the descriptive phenomenological method (Englander, 2012). Schwandt (2006; as cited in Bliss, 2016:16) stated "The researcher seeks to convey a meaning that is fundamental to the experience no matter which specific individual had the experience".

### **3.1.2.2. Types of phenomenology**

Creswell (2013) discussed two types of phenomenology based on van Manen's (1990) and Moustakas's (1994) Hermeneutics and transcendental phenomenology respectively.

While Hermeneutics phenomenology focuses on the study of the lived experiences (phenomenology) and interpreting the texts of life (hermeneutics) (van Manen, 1990; as cited in Creswell, 2013) transcendental phenomenology is an approach in which a researcher focuses more on description of the lived experiences of participants and less on the interpretations (Moustakas, 1994). "Transcendental means in which everything perceived freshly, as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994: 34).

Of these two approaches I selected Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology as I wanted to focus more on the description of individual's lived experiences of forgiveness (Moustakas, 1994) and transcendental phenomenology is an appropriate design for exploring and understanding the meaning of participants' experiences (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). For example, Bryant (2019) used Moustakas's phenomenological research approach to study the lived experiences of emotional forgiveness, and Mokhtar (2000) used empirical-phenomenological study to investigate, understand, and

describe the lived experience of individual forgiveness. Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell (2004) selected transcendental phenomenology method to their research. They believed that the procedures and steps to analyze data provided by Moustakas (1994) are ideal for helping less experienced researchers.

### **3.1.3. Research methods**

Research methods are specific techniques employed by a researcher to collect, analyze and interpret her/his study (Creswell, 2014). That is it is the use of specific techniques and instruments for collecting data, specific techniques for selecting samples as well as analyzing and replicating data.

#### **3.1.3.1. Data collection instrument**

Primarily interview of individuals in the place where they live in or work in is used to collect phenomenological qualitative data (Bliss, 2016; Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994)). For example semi structured, in-depth phenomenological interviews were used by Bryant (2019) to collect rich descriptions of participants' lived experiences of emotional forgiveness, by Akhtar (2015) to understand individuals lived experiences of forgiveness; a qualitative interview was used by Fanner (2004) and Mokhtar (2000) to gather descriptions of participant's experience of forgiveness.

I used Moustakas's (1994) interview protocol, and Akhtar's (2015) and Mokhtar's (2000) interview guides to create twelve open-ended, semi structured interview guides to interview participants about their forgiveness experience. In addition I used phenomenological literatures (Bliss (2016), Creswell (2013), Groenewald (2004) to formulate the research questions. I translated the English version of the interview guide in to Amharic version and the Amharic version was used to interview. After I interviewed two individuals I found the need to modify the interview guide and accordingly I rewritten the twelve interview guide in to seven.

Eight individuals interviewed about their forgiveness experience in the place where they live in or work in. Considering techniques to record interview and getting consent from participants to use such techniques by a researcher is crucial (Moustakas, 1994). To this end I audiotaped four willing interviewee and wrote notes for those unwilling of audiotaping the interview because of their doubt about the use of audio. I interviewed each participant only once that lasts 23 to 40 minutes.

### **3.1.3.2. Sampling technique**

In qualitative research a researcher purposefully select participants that will best help him/her understand the problem and research question (Creswell, 2007). Purposive sampling is extremely useful when the researcher want to describe a phenomenon or develop something about which a little is known (Kumar, 2014).

Participants were recruited purposively using criterion and snowball sampling strategies (Bryant, 2019; Creswell, 2007). Criterion sampling strategy is used to select participants who meet some criterion and this strategy is used in phenomenological study where all participants have experienced the phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 2007). A snow-ball sampling is used to get more potential participants by the help of the already interviewed participant (Akhtar, 2015; Groenewald, 2004). Accordingly this study adopted Purposive sampling of criterion and snowball sampling strategies because a key criteria of the study were to recruit participants who had claimed forgiveness in response to any actual or perceived hurt and who are above “consent age”/18 (FDRE constitution, 1995).

There is no agreement among phenomenological researchers about the number of participants (Bliss, 2016). The question of “how many” sample is irrelevant in qualitative research, relevance is even more important than representativeness to select participant (Englander, 2012) as quality is the most important thing in a qualitative research, not the quantity (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2013) the potential participants in phenomenological study may vary in size from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15. To this end eight adult individuals were interviewed in this study. For example, six individual by Fanner (2004), seven men by Bryant (2019), eight individuals by Mokhtar (2000), nine individual by Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell (2004), 10 participant by Groenewald (2004).

### **3.1.3.3. Procedures for Recruitment and Description of Participants**

Firstly participants had been identified through media (six) and social networking, e.g. publicizing for friends that I am looking for individuals who experienced forgiveness, (four). Among the six individuals identified through media only the address of four are found and contacted through phone and out of which one is not willing to take part in this study. The other one was willing but he was busy and unable to arrange time and place over three months. And only two of them are interviewed. Of these two interviewed one participant cited me another who forgives and accordingly I contacted physically and

got his consent and interviewed. The other four participants are approached by using social network and the remaining one participant is approached by snowballing.

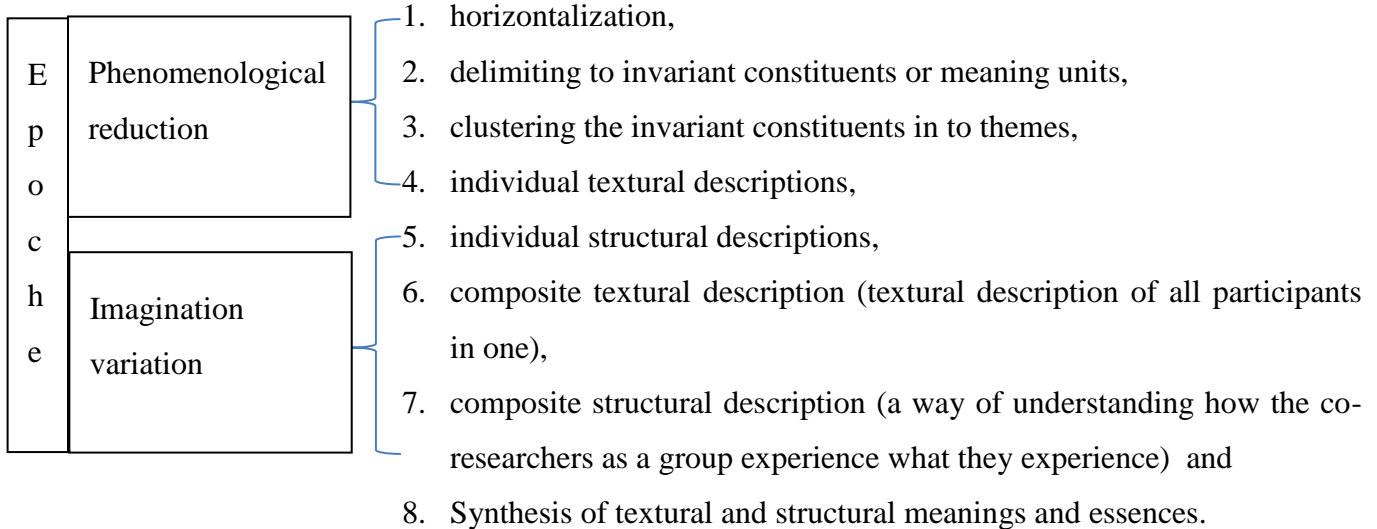
Eight individuals who experienced forgiveness were recruited. When I got the consent I have asked the participant to arrange a place and time convenient for her/him to conduct the interview. Before starting the interview I read all the interview questions for four participants and then I have proceeded to interview one by one. For others, based on their interest, I directly interviewed one by one. Three participants were recruited from Addis Ababa and five were recruited from the state of Amhara across different country sides. The participants were predominantly male (n= 7) and one was female, ages ranged from 33 to 90 years. Over a period of three months a total of twelve potential participants were identified out of which ten participants were approached; eight were interviewed. The demographic details presented below.

**Table 1:** participants’ demography

<b>participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Religion affiliation</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
participant1	Male	47	Degree and above	Christian	Politician
participant2	Male	61	Illiterate	Ethiopian orthodox Tewahdo	Farmer
participant3	Male	48	Degree and above	Christian	Journalist
participant4	Male	44	Literate(clergy)	Ethiopian orthodox Tewahdo	Farmer
participant5	Male	34	Priest	Ethiopian orthodox Tewahdo	Priest and farmer
participant6	Male	90	Illiterate	Ethiopian orthodox Tewahdo	Farmer
participant7	Female	33	Illiterate	Ethiopian orthodox Tewahdo	Farmer and mother
participant8	Male	--	Degree and above	--	Teacher

### 3.1.3.4. Data analysis method: Phenomenological analysis

Phenomenological analysis is a process consisting of several steps to cluster data, develop meanings, and present essential description of the participants experience about a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). The phenomenological analysis starts with Epoché and ended with the development of the essence (Moustakas, 1994). I used the modification of the Colaizzi (1978) Methods of analysis of phenomenological Data by moustakas (1994). In this phenomenological data analyzing procedure, there are specific steps of data analysis under the umbrella of phenomenological reduction and imagination variation in which Epoché is applicable in all steps to describe the essence of the phenomenon. The basic steps explained by Moustakas (1994) are:



1. Horizontalization: listing all expression relevant to the experience: Each statement in horizontalizing holds equal value and to identify significant statements, participants accounts unrelated to a study removed.

To this step I did the following: first I transcribed the recorded data and then translated the entire written Amharic version in to English version word by word, phrase by phrase and sentence by sentence; here I used Google translator. Following this I listed all data from the verbatim expressions of participants and then I have identified significant statements by removing unrelated expressions in relation to forgiveness.

2. Delimiting to invariant constituents or meaning units: to determine the invariant constituents overlapping, repetitive and vague expressions are eliminated.

3. Clustering and thermalizing the invariant constituents: clustering the invariant constituents of the experience that are related in to a thematic label.
4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application: validation checks the invariant constituents and their accompanying theme against the complete record of the participant. Incompatible and inexplicit invariant constituents and themes with the complete transcription should be deleted.
5. Using the validated invariant constituents and themes, construct for each co-researcher an individual textural description of the experience.
6. construct for each co-researcher an individual structural description of the experience based on individual textural description and imaginative variation
7. Composite textural description, synthesizing the themes into a description of the experiences of the individuals (textural description of all participants in one) and composite structural description (a way of understanding how the co-researchers as a group experience what they experience) and
8. Synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences. Composite textural and structural descriptions are synthesized to construct a composite description of the meanings and the essences of the experience.

Generally, in phenomenological study researchers need not bring their subjectivity throughout the study. Instead they rely on viewpoints of the participants (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015).

### **3.1.5. Validity and reliability**

**Qualitative validity** refers the researchers attempt to check the accuracy of the findings by using certain processes (Cresswell, 2007, 2014). Among the eight strategies available in (Creswell, 2007, 2014), he recommended discussing one or more strategies to check the accuracy of the findings. Accordingly I considered four strategies.

Use a rich, thick description to convey the findings: thick depiction may take readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences. For example, offer many perspectives about a theme make findings become more realistic, richer and valid (Cresswell, 2007). Accordingly this research described the accounts of the participants starting from the significant statements to the development of composite descriptions of the essence.

Clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study: This self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers (Cresswell, 2007). To this end the use of Epoche in this study is sound.

Use peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the account. By locating a peer debriefer I accepted questions raised by the debriefer and some accounts of the participants are reviewed again.

Triangulate different data sources of information: themes established based on several perspectives from participants add validity of the study (Cresswell, 2007). Collecting data from different kinds of informants can serve for triangulation (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). And accordingly I collected data from individuals who have different backgrounds in terms of education, occupation, living place (which have a degree difference in the sense of individualist and collectivist culture).

**Qualitative reliability** indicates that a particular approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects. For example quality audiotaping and transcribing it served to enhance reliability (Cresswell, 2007). Accordingly four participants were audiotaped and transcribed as well as for the remaining written notes were used.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Based on the phenomenological data analysis steps explained in chapter three the transcripts of individuals in this study analyzed and presented as follows.

#### **Relevant statements**

Horizontalization: from the transcribed verbatim of individuals I identified several relevant statements that are listed without any criteria to put in order (see appendix B).

#### **Themes with accompanying invariant constituents**

Eight themes emerged from the invariant constituents determined in analysis step two and from significant statements identified in step one. And these themes along with their accompanying invariant constituents are validated by the complete reports of the participants.



Table 2: Themes with accompanying invariant constituents

Theme	Accompanying invariant constituent
<b>Representation of the harm/hurt</b>	The harm inflicted on participants is a big deal
<b>Paths to decide and grant forgiveness</b>	Deciding and granting forgiveness achieved personally I convinced myself and decided to forgive Others helped me to decide and/ or grant forgiveness before shimagle I forgave publicly, via media, without directly communicating the offender I decided to forgive and have forgave internally I offered forgiveness to the offender by going to his house I let the offender to know about my complaint
<b>Refraining from activities against granting forgiveness</b>	Refrain from negative activities following my decision to forgive
<b>Forgiveness entailing reconciliation, love and establishing positive relationship</b>	Forgiveness entailing reconciliation with the perpetrator and establishing positive relationship Our pre transgression relationship has been returned following forgiveness
<b>Forgiveness as letting go off negative feelings and/or developing positive ones</b>	I was able to let go of negative feelings through forgiveness I develop positive feelings following forgiveness
<b>Individual capability differences in forgiveness</b>	Forgiving is easy It is moderate to forgave It was difficult to forgive
<b>Circumstances facilitating victims' capability to forgive</b>	I forgave the transgressor(s) for the sake of myself and others Forgiveness is my principle Forgiveness is an expression of my religion The destructiveness of resentment and revenge Past relationship: we have spent good and bad times together Though I decided to forgive so far forgiveness granted following an apology Humanity and Empathy: Humans can feel the pain resulting from the hurt I was able to forgive due to my life experience I accepted my past misdeeds
<b>Forgiveness is beneficial</b>	Forgiving is a source for health, happiness, respect, freedom and peace Forgiving helped me to have meaningful life My forgiving enabled me productive/to use available resources

## **1. Representation of the harm/hurt**

The initial point for forgiving others is the occurrence of harm whether it is perceived or actual. All participants reported the harm they experienced as “severe”. The harm includes name defamation by gossiping in the case of one participant, assault in the case of two participants, bodily harm in the case of two participants and human right violation in their own as well as in their family member in the case of three participants. Participant1 described his hurt as “There have been so many human right violations committed on me, but I do not want to express them in detail. However, the offences that have been inflicted on my children and wife were more painful than the injury inflicted on me”. He concluded that the aim of the offenders was, “ተስፋ ቆርጫ አንገቴን እንደደፋና ደቅርታ እንደጠየቅ ነበር, to make me hopeless and to down my head so that to ask apology”. The second participant represented the transgression as “ugly action”. “...my 4<sup>th</sup> younger brother hid himself in the trees around the road and hit me”. He felt upset and sadness due to the idea that why “he [the offender] made such kind of ugly action on me”. Participant3 still feel disappointment somewhat when he is thinking of the human right violations committed on him. Participant4 expressed the transgression as “heart break” “... his degrading insult caused me ... to blame my fate. And consequently my heart had been broken”. A participant who has been in conflict with his neighbor for more than forty years represent living in conflict with a neighbor as “ye aytina dimet nuro, cat and rat like living. It was a living full of suspicion. The harm was grave; difficult to list the details of the harm”. For the female participant the damage was very irritating and embarrassing that led her to think to retaliate beyond tit-for-tat. Participant8 used the term “atrocities”, unforgettable and satanic action” to express the harm done on him. This atrocity had been continued for 25 years and restricted his right to work, movement and freedom.

## **2. Paths to decide and grant forgiveness**

In their way to offer forgiveness, participants have used personal effort (intrapersonal process) and /or others (shimagles, families, offenders), interpersonal process. By using these two main processes individuals granted forgiveness in four ways: openly communicating to the offender before the shimagles, went to the house of the offender and openly communicating to the offender without third party, publicly but without directly communicating to the offender, or implicitly (neither communicating to the offender nor the public). And offering forgiveness is one-to-one and one-to- many.

Even though four participants granted forgiveness in front of others they have used their own effort on the way towards forgiveness. Especially prior to the help of shimagles these participants decided to forgive and as a result they refrain from thoughts and activities that hinder forgiveness. The remaining four participants granted forgiveness by their own effort, intra-personal process. But they used different ways to offer their forgiveness.

By directly telling what he/she believes in as well as his/her complaint, participant1 had been experiencing forgiveness implicitly in a continuing harm in prison and forgave publicly after he released. “my arrest strengthened my principle in forgiveness habit”; “by refraining from any physical fight and unnecessary verbal confrontation I have told the offender what I believe in whatever opportunity I got when I was in prison”. And after he released from prison he has openly discussed the complaint and assured the forgiveness in any opportunity he got (e.g. “I am writing about my forgiveness, I have expressed my forgiveness in different medias and podiums that I have forgiven those who harmed me and that I do not want to charge them”). Here the forgiveness has been granted publicly by one victim towards more than one offender, but not directly communicating to the offenders.

After released from prison participant3 granted forgiveness. By convincing himself just to forgive and not to revenge those who harmed him Participant3 has forgiven internally, “I have forgiven implicitly who violated my human rights”. Here forgiveness has been granted by a victim towards more than one offender, but communicating neither to the public nor offenders.

Following a discontinued of 25 years harm and having return to work, participant8 has openly discussed the complaint and assured the forgiveness officially repeatedly. “I did not forgive within the 25 years of continued atrocity inflicted on me. Following the discontinuity of such atrocity I officially (through media) have forgiven those who harmed me whether they are alive or not.” Here the forgiveness has been granted publicly by one victim towards more than one offender, but without directly communicating to the offenders.

After discussed with himself Participant4 recognized, for example, he is living with his offender’s sister, he have children with her. As a result he decided to forgive. Having decided to forgive the offender and spent more than a year waiting others and found nobody who tried to mediate him with the offender, participant4 has granted his forgiveness by go to the house of the offender. “After I found no one who tried to facilitate the reconciliation between me and the offender, I decided to go to him and forgive him

whether he accept me or hit me... I told him that no one had tried to reconcile you and me; so I have forgiven you and came to you. And we talked the details of the past occasion and have reopened the pre-transgression relations". In this forgiveness processes all the efforts has been personal, but at the end there is receiving of the forgiveness by the offender with high shock.

These four participants granted forgiveness in three ways though the process is intrapersonal. The two participants' granted forgiveness by publicly complaining the hurt and have forgiven the offender (using whatever platform participant1; only media participant8). Here the forgiveness is open but not directly communicated with the offender. The third participant granted forgiveness by affirming his decision to forgive and to apply it for himself and it is neither publicized nor communicated directly the transgressors, and the other participant in this intrapersonal process forgiveness was granted by go to the transgressor house and it is one to one.

For the remaining four participants granting forgiveness has occurred through others (shimagles); here the personal effort of participants in the decision to forgive and refraining from negative activities has not been forgotten. However there is a slight difference in the decision to forgive and process to grant forgiveness. In this regard one participant2 stated "When I was in hospital I have already started to forgive my brother; I prohibited my sons while they planned to hit and/or to charge the offender. My response was very positive when the shimagles, mediators came and asked me to reconcile with my brother as it was my interest to resolve the dispute peacefully". Consequently participant2 grant forgiveness to the offender before the shimagle. For participant2 complete forgiveness is achieved by the help of others, shimagles even though he had decided and started behaviors of forgiveness. Similar to this statement participant5 already decided to forgive, but he did not express his forgiveness to the offender till the shimagles has facilitated the reconciliation process. The shimagles has told the offender that he was wrong and should compensate the offended; and he also expressed his remorse, and accepted and did what the shimagles said. Then after the offended forgave the offender in front of the shimagles and they bless each other. In another day they met each other and discussed the issue and blame each other as well as strengthen their forgiveness. The other participant described "When I thought the case inside my heart I decided to forgive and not to create any problem from this time onwards. I convince myself not to dispute with the offender but rather to discuss the issue with him and his family if I perceive he wronged me again. Then I told to his sons and other shimagles that I need to reconcile with my offender, so that they can initiate a reconciliation ceremony. Then we sit down and discuss the issue

before the shimagle and by apologizing him of my past misdeeds I have forgiven him in front of the shimagles and his sons without any precondition”. For the third participant the decision to forgive has started by the endeavor effort and advice of shimagles and her husband “though the perpetrator did not acknowledge the wrongs, I have forgiven the wrongdoer before the shimagles after I told her openly what she wronged me”.

### **3. Refraining from thoughts and activities against granting forgiveness**

This theme is highly related with the thoughts and activities during and following decisions to forgive and granting forgiveness. To this end all participants refrain from some thoughts and activities that hinder granting of forgiveness. They reduced ruminating the hurt, avoided thoughts and attempts of revenge, and did not charged the offenders. In line with this idea five participants assured that they were refraining from charging their offender(s). Participant1 said “Though the aim of justice is to teach the wrongdoers, ... you have not to charge those you once forgive them. ... Personally I do not need to charge those who harmed me”. The other supported this idea by stating “I do not charge the offenders, even I do not witness against them if the prosecutor attorney request me to do so”. Participant8 asserted “If I had charged the offenders, I would have revenged them and have not got moral intelligence”. Participant2 also stated “When I was in hospital I heard that my sons are planning to hit and/or to accuse the offender and I ordered them not to do so”. And another one confirmed that “before I explicitly forgave him I...was against my wife when she charged her brother”. The potential imprisonment that may result from revenge is one factor that enabled Participant5 to forgive the offender. Releasing

### **4. Forgiveness as letting go off negative feelings**

All participants described their forgiveness as releasing the negative feelings or motivations they held against the offender. Participants had expressed their forgiveness as letting go of the hatreds or any unpleasant things towards the offender. “...you have not to count the harms inflicted on you by others, participant1”; “አንቺ ብዙኛም እኔ ግን ነገሩን ትቸጥላሁ እናም ይቅር ብዮሻለሁ, though you deny the wrong I leave go of the issue and forgive you, participant7”; “Forgiveness ...is leaving the wrong inflicted on me for God and forgiving the offender as God does not like revenge and resentment, participant5”; “forgiveness is a process of convincing oneself and deciding not to hold bitterness on and not to end contact with the offender, participant2”; “my forgiving is the process of struggling the feeling of disappointment and forgiving others unconditionally..., participant3”; “Forgiveness is not only

refraining from wishing and/or doing bad things towards the offender..., participant4”; “forgiveness is, ይቅርታ ማለት ለዓመጃት አርግዝው ከኖርሁት ቂጥኖ በቀል ጋር ለማላገልና ሌላ አዳስ ቂጥኖ በቀል ለለሙዝ ለራስና ለእግዚአብሔር ቃል መግባትና ይህንም ከሽማግሌዎችና ከበደላኝ ሰው ፊት የሚጋገጥ ውሳኔና ሐደት ነው; a decision and process to set free myself from the resentment and revenge that I have pregnant of for many years against the offender and not to hold a new dislikes and vowing it to myself and to God and confirming it before the transgressor and shimagles, participant6”; “Forgiving means to let go of the wrong did on me by the offender and announcing it to the offender to enable them to learn from their past mistakes and not to do it again, participant8”. However participants described their forgiveness beyond letting go of negativity and developing positivity that is reconciling and reestablishing relationship.

### **5. Forgiveness entailing reconciliation, love and establishing positive relationship**

This theme is highly related with the theme “forgiveness as letting go off negative feelings”. Letting go of negative feelings or thoughts is the base towards reconciliation and establishing positive relationship. However it does not mean that all participants who release their negative feelings and thoughts reconciled with the offender. In this study while interpersonal forgiveness results in reconciliation and established positive relationship intrapersonal process does not.

Participant4 expressed the role of forgiveness has on the present and future relations rather than the past by saying “ለለፈ ክረምት ቤት አይሰራም, lalefe kiremit bet ayeseram” literally building a house for the past winter is impossible.... My decision to grant forgiveness is about the present and future life and relationship.... Of course my forgiveness was “Enigida”, strange for many people including the offender and me as the usual forgiveness process has been conducted through “shimiglina”.

Many participants have conceptualized their forgiveness in terms of reconciliation, love and establishing positive relationship with the transgressor. Individuals who have granted forgiveness interpersonally, face-to-face describe that their forgiveness is reconciliation and established positive relationship and this positive relationship embodied liking. Forgiveness is “a process of convincing oneself and deciding not

to hold bitterness on and not to end contact with the offender and thereby assured it by reconciling with the offender, participant2” ( e.g. he assured his forgiveness to the offender and the Shimagle that he do not need any compensation, even the cost he incurred for medication of the injury; instead what he need is the offenders’ love. That time onwards the relationship between the forgiver and forgiven with their accompanying families has rebuild and continued until today in times of happiness as well as hardship. Forgiveness is an “agreement with the offender, participant7”. Participant6 defined his forgiveness as “a decision and process to set free myself from the resentment and revenge ... and confirming it before the transgressor and shimagle in order to live together peacefully like the pre transgression time”.

Forgiveness is about love, but did not entail reconciliation and establishing positive relationship, for the one human right violation participant who has forgiven without directly communicating the offenders. “My forgiveness is about love: the “Bible said ‘love never consider grudges’. When I advocate peaceful struggle, it is about love...”.

For the three participants who have forgiven their offenders through intrapersonal process without directly communicating the offenders the relationship is neither returned nor worsened. For example, “I have not seen the offenders since I released from prison”, “I need to greet my offenders; but they feel ashamed and far away from me when they see me”.

## **6. Individual capability differences in forgiveness**

At the beginning there are individual differences in the degree to forgive hurts they have suffered. Participants have described their ability to forgive others in three levels: while two participants said it was easy the remaining two and three stated it as moderate and very difficult respectively. But the one said nothing about this.

Recognizing their own reasons two individuals have forgave easily. Participant1 confirmed this as “for me it was just easy to forgive; it did not take me time to forgive for the harms inflicted on me. Firstly “as a politician I recognize no option other than forgiveness to forward a country. That is why I advocate forgiveness. Secondly as human being forgiveness is greatness. And finally though I have had some pain of seeing harms towards my wife and children this pain is nothing when you love your country. I believe in national reconciliation and forgiveness and I was the proponent of forgiveness before I jailed”.

Thinking of as a human being, older brother and of familial conditions Participant2 found forgiveness just simple and best choice.

Two participants expressed their forgiveness as moderate at the beginning. Here participant4 stated that beyond the stone thrown at him by the offender, the insult was immoral that broken his heart at the moment. However, “kesewu ye miyameliti yelem yibalal” participant4, literally nothing has remain undone from humans. So thinking of the present and future relations enabled forgiveness possible for participant4. Participant5 said “though I became very upset at the moment, latter I thought it was not good to respond in a way that I tried to hit the offender. Accordingly it was possible to forgive the offender who harmed me”.

The participants who labeled their ability to forgive was challenging expressed in a similar way. For Participant3 forgiveness is a choice, but to apply his forgiveness choice he faced a challenge from the reoccurring disappointments after he told for himself he had forgiven the offenders. He is struggling against the reoccurring disappointments and the tendency to revenge and assured his forgiveness daily. He stated that “following the hurt you may experience disappointment which challenged your forgiveness. Forgiveness is not just simple that you forgive once when you need. You have to struggle your reoccurred feeling of upset and forgive daily”. The other said “I had spent around 40 years in conflict with my neighbor due to my inability to forgive; we have breached reconciliation four times. I think this is key implication for the difficulty to forgive especially at youthhood and adulthood time. Unless we forgive from our heart lasting reconciliation is impossible”. The other described that “in fact at the beginning it was very difficult for me to forgive. I have refused and returned the shimagles 2 times when they tried to help me to forgive and to reconcile with the offender”.

### **7. Circumstances facilitating victims’ capability to forgive**

Participants has described circumstances that enabled their capability to forgive that includes for the sake of one’s own and others, religion, destructiveness of revenge and holding grudges, humanity and empathy, prior relationship, amends of offenders, and accepting responsibility.



### **a. Forgiveness for the sake of one's own and others**

In this theme all participants described that their experience of forgiveness is initiated for the sake of both one's own and others. All are concerned for their individual, family, children, neighbor well-being and their country's safety, stability, and democracy as well as for the continuity of the next generations. Individual verbatim examples presented as follows. "In principle I found forgiveness very important at a country level and I need to have this quality at personal level.... As a human being to respect, to correct, to control and to civilize oneself are the main energies for humans. Thus I need to have these qualities and to be modern Ethiopian. I need to my beloved country to have a community with stable peace, economy and politics; thereby the people live in equality. People who are exemplar (like Mandela, Martin Luter king, Ghandi etc) in this world are those who forgave others not who kill humans" (participant1). "I believe that the benefit gained from forgiveness is greater than its drawback and this benefit can transfered from generation to generation. And also forgiveness, I believe, is necessary to bring democracy for this country [Ethiopia]" (participant3).

"The complexity that the dispute between us caused on the remaining family of me and the offender has made me to forgive" (participant2). "I forgave to normalize the present and future living of me and my family as well as the living of the offender and his family. Doing better things for the next generation is good... In this earth life is short as a single individual. But as a generation it is continual. So we have to bother the continuation of our children" (participant4). "I never want to transfer such painful living with a neighbor to my children. And as an elder I have to mediate others who are in conflict" (participant6).

"The previous injury is directly on me; but when I think it again and again the revenges that I want to do will have an impact on my family as well as the offender's family who have no any idea in the harm inflicted on me" (participant5). "I forgave her as I like my children, house and my living. My unforgiveness may lead me to divorce and as a result my children may be hurt and disintegrated. If I would not forgive I thought it would harm me as long as I live in this earth and after death" (participant7).

"I forgave for my own benefit, for the sake of others (the next generation and the offenders).... If I had not able to forgiven the offenders who inflicted a satanic action on me, I would have ruminated this negative thing again and again and there by my health would have endangered. And I need time to thank those (my families, close friends and God) who helped me to get this glorious opportunity (the

opportunity to return back to my work). Thus I do not want to take time to entertain negative ideas and to revenge those who did atrocity on me. I need the next generation to learn from us by observing; you cannot teach by revenge. Forgiveness can teach; children can learn from forgiveness. Forgiveness can help children to use their full potential to serve their own and their country. First of all it can help them to free themselves from revenge. And also Punishments never teach those people who have been inflicted atrocity on me. Reasonable actions (e.g. an eye for an eye) even never correct them from their wrongdoings. The better thing is to forgive them; thereby they can see and understand that the act they have done was wrong. So my forgiving to the offenders will give them time and chance to thoroughly investigate their mistakes” (participant8).

### **b. An expression of religion**

Forgiveness being one of the expressions of their religion, all participants has used it as a significant factor. Participants described their forgiveness as a way of practicing their religion. For them forgiving is a way to be forgiven by God so that the rest of their life will be good.

By reading the Bible Participant1 recognize that life is short, “death is inevitable” and he questioned “why I do better things as long as I live in this world. Thanks to God, I believe I have the quality of courage and moral intelligence to forgive”. As an Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido follower participant2 and 4 believe that doing better things (e.g. forgiving others) is the primary way to get in to heaven afterlife. They believe “living in this earth is just temporary, but living in Eden is eternal”. For participant2 life becomes better both in earth and heaven if we are forgiver. Similarly a priest participant said in the age of 20-40 humans have to thank God with clean heart. “If humans spent this age range not harming, killing, and insulting others, not holding grudges, without fornication, etc., life will be hopeful both in earth and sky; will get in to heaven. Thus this age range is the time when we have to do better things in earth which results in best living in the rest of our life time as well as after death”. For participant3 forgiving others is a moral obligation as a Christian follower. He believes that “God has forgiven me and will forgive me without any precondition and this has influenced me to forgive others without any precondition”.

Participant6 started to think of God and of the fate of his soul after death when he had become older and weak. “To make my eternal living good I have to do better things (e.g. to forgive) in this earth. Even though I have spent my youthhood and adulthood time by not forgiving my neighbor, now is the time to

forgive regardless of the past”. The belief participant7 had in God enabled her to forgive by resisting whatever unpleasant name given to her. She stated “on my side I have forgiven my sister-in-law for God’s sake... Forgiving has a benefit both on earth and sky. If I am not forgiven others, God will not forgive me”.

### **c. Humanity and empathy**

Almost all of the participants have expressed humanity and experienced sympathy which in turn facilitated their forgiveness process.

Participant1 believes in humanity. And he said “...You have to love others as your brother and sister just in their humanity. If a lion eat a lion, it cannot feel the pain inflicted on the one being eaten. But humans can feel the pain. I do not want my offenders’ children suffered what my children suffered when I was in prison”. Participant2 is guided by a principle “ሰው ለሰው ልጅ ልጥን ነው; sewi lesewi liji libisi newi”, literally a human is a cloth for human. For him valuing humans first enabled to pass whatever hardship you faced including the devil. As an older brother he understood his brothers feeling “it was only me who understand the feeling of the pain resulting from the injury”. Participant4 felt something inside his heart when he had thought of the living of the offender. “I forgave the offender because I need respect first as a human being and second as a priest”, participant5. For participant8 animals like dog, lion, etc. can revenge; but they cannot forgive. As a human “I have to forgive”.

### **d. Destructiveness of revenge and grudges**

All of the participants have remembered and thought of the costs that resulted and will resulted from the revenge they are going to do and from holding grudges. While four of the participants focused on the consequence of revenge the remaining three focused on grudges. Participants stated revenge as cyclical, unlimited in time and place, as well as it go beyond the intended target; even the intended targets of revenge included the innocents. And their forgiveness is emerged as a response to stop such cyclical, unlimitted effects of revenge. Participant1 underscored the need to be free from the retribution system (e.g. Dem-melash)... transferred from generation to generation. For him... using resentment and revenge is endless. “Holding grudges makes your life pessimistic”, participant3. For participant2 “choosing revenge is declaring harm on one’s own body, children, family, neighbor and property in

unspecified time and place. Preferring to respond harm through revenge is choosing to aggravate the harm and to let to extend to others”.

Participant5 stated both the effect of revenge and counter-revenge that either the “offender may die if I hit him, and as a result I may be forced to displace or be sentenced life-time imprisonment that I do not want to see in my life or I may die of the counter revenge while I am attempting to revenge the wrongdoer. Consequently the fate of my family is disintegration”. He has been spending time and energy around four months thinking of how to revenge the offender and has not been working for five – six days. He has been concerned more on the indirect consequence of the revenge on others. For him revenge is done for temporary desire which results in life-span regret and sadness. Similar to this consequence participant6 stated he has got nothing benefit when he live with grudges around 40 years; instead it has been full of disadvantage “The resources, time and energy that I spent when I thought and attempt to revenge the offender were huge”. In thinking to revenge the offender participant6 had hurt the offender’s herds, crops, children and relatives who have no any intention on the harm inflicted on him; and this is the miserable side of revenge on those who have no any connection to the transgression. He stated the consequence of the revenge as “we have been in unnecessary suspicion of each other when whatever wrong has been occurred in our herds or property and complaint each other openly before prayers at church. Our revenge has had a wave like effect on our extended family. I found the long term consequence of my revenge is on my children. I withdrew from the Mahiber, Idir and Senbete where even his extended relatives are a member. I have been in difficulty to fetch water as the offender closed the road (private) near his house”. Generally holding resentment and revenge for participant6, ቂጥላ በቀል ማዘዝ የተዳረነ እሳት ማለት ነጭ is like “fire in ash” and as a result the damage is uncertain that will hurt both intended and unintended parties in an unspecified time and place.

#### **e. Prior relationship with the offender**

Participants who have forgiven interpersonally have remembered the pre-transgression relations with the offender. And this prior relationship has influenced on their way to forgive. Many of them described the “good and bad times” they spent with the perpetrator; described their good neighborhood qualities. A priest participant described it as “before the incident we were friends, neighbors, collogues and we were stand in one side when argument is raised in the place where we live and work in”. A female participant described her prior relationship with the offender as “I had lived more than 8 years in love with my

sister-in-law; we have been living sisterly and brotherly eating foods and drinking water”. A 90 year old participant stated the prior relationship as “unforgettable” “I and my offender were good neighbors and have spent unforgettable good and bad times together”.

#### **f. Shimagles and amends**

Amends on the side of the offender contributed vital role in the process to decide and especially to assure forgiveness by participants who forgave through shimagles. In the case of four participants the shimagles has played instrumental role by advising both the offender and the victim to apologize and receive forgiveness and to forgive respectively and by facilitating conditions to bring both the offender and the victim face-to-face so that the two parties can deal the issue before the shimagles. The three participants who were victims of human right violations grant forgiveness regardless of the apology by the offender. For example Participant8 said “I did not expect any apology from the offenders”. However individuals who forgive interpersonally needed some remorse from the offender though they decided to forgive prior to the offenders showed remorse. “...I expected my brother’s remorse to grant my forgiveness. After both the offender and I brought before the ‘Shimagle’, the offender expressed his remorse and apologize me... I granted forgiveness”, participant2. Similarly participant5 offered forgiveness following remorse and compensation of the offender. However the remaining three participants offer forgiveness without apology, but acceptance of their forgiveness by the offender. “By the effort of shimagles we sit down and discuss the issue...I have forgiven him in front of the shimagles ...without any precondition...the shimagless played a vital role in facilitating the receiving of forgiveness”, participant6; “When I told the offender ...I have forgiven you and came to you he accepted me with high shock”, participant4.

#### **g. Accepting responsibility**

Participant6 has accepted the mistakes he had done during the conflict and takes responsibility as “none of us has seen our mistakes even for a single episode; we only consider our righteousness.... by apologizing him of my past misdeeds I have forgiven him in front of the shimagles and his sons without any precondition”.

## 8. Forgiveness is beneficial

Participants have expressed different benefits gained from experiencing forgiveness.

### a. Free from negative affects while developing positive ones

All participants described about experiencing reduction of and freedom from negative feelings and developed positive ones following their forgiveness.

All participants reported the reduction of their negative feelings following their forgiveness. They stated they have become free from bitterness, resentment, hostility, dislike, unnecessary suspicion, ruminating the hurt, thoughts and attempts of revenge and conflict. “Personally I have no hate towards others who wronged me”; “If I had not forgiven, I would have suspected of my shadow especially at night in thinking that the offender may attack me again. I have no negative feelings towards the offender”; “**ቋጥሻ በቀል ማዘገ መቶ ከሎ ግራም ጠፍ ተሸክሞ እንደሚረ ነው**; living with grudges is like rotating by carrying 100 kilogram Teff; I become free from such heavy burden of grudge. I believe I substituted the pessimistic thinking resulting from holding grudges with hope; I became a free person”; “I did not wish any unpleasant thing to the offender; I do not need the offenders to face suffering”; “... Now I become free from grudges that I hold of around 40 years. I become free from any unnecessary suspicion”; “if I had not able to forgiven the offenders who inflicted a satanic action on me, I would have ruminated this negative thing again and again and these negative thoughts would have digest me”.

While letting go of the negative feelings towards the offender participants has described the development of positive affect (empathy, caring, happiness, peace, hope and meaning in life) following their forgiveness. Participants expressed their positive feeling in such a way as “I wish positive things to my brother”; “I wish good things alike for my family and his family. I empathize when I heard something wrong has been occurred against the offender. My happiness is boundless when I see that my children and offender’s children are playing and helping with each other”.

All participants are experiencing peace following their forgiveness. “Your mind never felt peace when you hold grudge and you cannot be productive”; “I am living peaceful life”; “Since I am moving with hope I make peace with myself”; “I asleep with peace; it does not matter even if I leave the door open”; “...Currently I live peacefully with my neighbor, my families are playing with my neighbor’s family peacefully”; “I feel happiness, caring my children in peace; we live in peace”; “As the hurt has

continued for 25 years it is not forgettable and it would not have given me peace if I had needed to forget it consciously. Thus the best choice is to surpass the atrocity done on me”.

Three participants described their forgiveness enabled to have a meaningful life “I am happy with my marriage and got additional children. I have got my half house and my half living become full”; “I feel I did something good in my life”; “I feel as a full person”.

Four participants explicitly reported feeling healthy as a result of forgiving their offender. “So you feel healthy when you forgive those who wronged you”; “I sleep well without suspicion; I am sleeping well”; “Forgiveness is the returning back of my mind to its normal state like the pre transgression period”; “If I had not able to forgiven the offenders ...my health would have endangered”.

#### **b. Pre-transgression relationship returned to normal**

The broken relationship between the victims and offenders has returned to normal for five participants who granted forgiveness interpersonally and they share personal, social and economic issues together with the one being forgiven. Participant2 expressed “that time onwards, our families’ relationship has rebuilt and continued until today in times of happiness and hardship”. A priest participant described the returned relationship as:

Conflict with a neighbor is harmful: ቢጭ አይጠገም, it does not come to you at times of shouting for help; it does not help at times of sickness; it does not share food with you etc. My forgiveness to my neighbor has ended these disadvantages. we help each other; we share any hardship as well as happiness.

Participant4 expressed his happiness of rebuild relationship “my happiness is boundless when I see that the offender’s and my children are playing and helping with each other”. Similarly a female participant stated that “we help each other in any social life such as mahiber, Ekub, Idir and any party”.

For the other three participants who forgave their offenders intrapersonally the relationship is neither returned nor worsened.

### **c. Resource/productivity**

Participants described the benefit of their forgiveness in terms of resource and productivity. They have got the opportunity to use their resource, time and energy for their present and future living. Those who forgive without directly communicating to the offenders use their resource, time and energy to build their nation with stable community, economy and politics as well as democracy instead of retribution. In addition sharing of meal as well as tools used in the day to day activities are the outcome of returned relationship. "... From all walks of life people are being appreciating my forgiveness. The number of people who like me become increasing gradually. Now through time people are buying my forgiveness. You cannot move just a step if you have resentment and revenge". "I have got great feedbacks from my forgiveness: people told me they have learnt from my forgiveness. And hearing this is very enjoyable". "I do not spend time and energy thinking of the past harm ...my children are getting any fresh crops because the offender see them as equal to his children". "I gained surprising respect from the neighbors. When there is disagreement around ...I am selected to mediate the situation. To this end all conflicting parties listen and internalize what I am saying or advice".

### **Individual textural-structural description**

Based on the developed themes with their accompanying invariant constituents individual textural description along with their structural description constructed (for all details see appendix B).

### **Composite textural description**

What did individuals experience through their forgiveness?

When the participants described their experiences of forgiveness they used words such as personal and interpersonal process, decided to forgive, granting forgiveness before shimagles, granting forgiveness without directly communicating the offender, easy, possible and difficult to forgive, refraining from negativity, let go of hatreds and resentments, reconciliation, reestablished relationship, love, happiness, use of resource and productivity, meaningful life, sleep well, peace and health. Prior to the inception of forgiveness individuals described their experience of upset, anger, disappointment, resentment, hate, revengeful thought and attempt to revenge which implied that the original relationship are missing.



During and following the transgression participants were experiencing anger, upset, resentment and hate as they all represent the harm as a serious issue. Initially most participants used unforgiveness or attempt to revenge as a response to the hurt they suffered. But later recognizing that such responses are not worthy for their own and others' sake participants preferred to resolve the issue through forgiveness. And gradually they decided to forgive and started to lower their resentfulness and avoided thoughts and activities against their way to forgiveness.

Participants grant forgiveness personally or interpersonally. Those who used interpersonal process granted forgiveness before the shimagles and the offender and/or with their families after openly telling the hurts. One participant granted forgiveness by going to the offender's house without any third party. Others who used intrapersonal process granted forgiveness differently: publicly (through media) but without directly communicating to the offender, implicitly (neither communicating to the offender nor the public). And offering forgiveness is one-to-one or one-to-many.

Following decisions to forgive and granting forgiveness all participants abstain from the feelings and activities that are against forgiveness. They reduced hatred and resentment, controlled their negative emotions towards the offender, avoided thoughts and attempts of revenge, and did not charge the offenders. Five participants assured that they have refrained from charging their offender(s). Participant1 said "Though the aim of justice is to teach the wrongdoers,... personally I do not need to charge those who harmed me".

Forgiveness is releasing the negative feelings or motivations participants held towards the offender. They had expressed their forgiveness as letting go of the hatreds or any unpleasant things towards the offender. For example One participant said "forgiveness is a decision and process to set free myself from the resentment and revenge that I have pregnant of for many years against the offender and not to hold a new dislikes and vowing it to myself and to God and confirming it before the transgressor and council of members"; the other said "...you have not to count the harms inflicted on you by others". Beyond letting go of negative feelings or thoughts participants who forgive directly communicating to the offender conceptualized their forgiveness as reconciliation and establishing positive relationship.

Initially individuals' capacity to forgive falls on three extents: easy, possible and difficult to forgive. They experienced such capacity difference when they sought to start their decision to forgive. Those whose forgiveness was difficult at the beginning had decided not to reconcile and struggled the

reoccurring disappointment. For those who described their forgiveness as easy and moderate initially, some forgiving acts in mind such as trying to let go of the wrong, reducing harping on the incident, giving up revenge thoughts and withhold negative activities occurred. Despite such differences at the beginning, participants had forgiven who harmed them in consideration of varied circumstances. Participants stated revenge as cyclical, unlimited in time and place, as well as it go beyond the intended target. And their forgiveness is emerged as a response to stop such devastating, cyclical effects of revenge. Shimagles, indigenous mediators were vital catalysts for offering and receiving forgiveness for individuals in interpersonal conflict. When forgiveness is granted and received directly communicating with the offender there is physical contact, such as greeting, hugging, kissing or blessing.

Being forgiving has reversed the connection between the participant and the wrongdoer along their families. By letting go of the grudges five participants has reconciled and reestablished positive relationships with the transgressor. Thereby they along with their family returned the prior relationship and live peacefully with the offender. They share any personal, social and economic issues, and day to day activities which require help and collaboration.

Following their forgiveness participants have become free from bitterness, resentment, hostility, dislike, unnecessary suspicion, ruminating the hurt, thoughts and attempst of revenge and conflict while developed positive affect (empathy, caring, happiness, peace, hope, normality, and meaning in life). All participants move freely without fearing further hurt. Their forgiveness has returned their happiness and inner peace. Individuals get meaning in their new life as they developed hope in their futurity. Participants feel happy and developed a sense of wholeness.

By experiencing forgiveness participants believed they have done something good for their life. In this earth they felt that they did something good for their own life as well as for others (e.g. the next generation). As a result of their forgiveness most participants also felt that they are connected with their God.

Free from ruminating the hurts and negative feelings is the main reality for individuals experiencing forgiveness. Their forgiveness enabled participants to focus on the present and the future by leaving the past wrong to pass. Through forgiveness individuals make themselves free from the unpleasant thing they trapped in.

## **Composite structural description**

In what context did the forgivers have this experience?

The idea to forgive emerged to come in to mind when, at least, the offended individual had perceived harm. Being trapped in interrelated negative emotions following the actual or perceived harm, participants felt on the inside, their relationship to the offenders broken and their personal space restricted. They limited their mobility where they live in and their personal contact with others. There is a turning of negative emotions in mind in which one negative emotion accompanied by the other and consumed victims time and energy and direct the time and energy to the past consequently blocked present and future mobility in life. As a result of such blockage participants lived the past harm in the present that make the present and future unwell functioning and unproductive. They remembered the time before forgiveness as full of unpleasant thing. Holding grudges, and thoughts and attempts of revenge are costly than forgiving, and holding grudges means reliving the past hurt in the cost of the present.

Whether expressed explicitly or not, the victims experienced anger, upset, resentment, hostility and hatred towards the transgressor accompanied by bodily reactions such as scratch their head, bite one's lip, felt headache, lack sleep, loss appetite, lack of attention, breathing heavily. Not in peace with someone is directly related to not in peace with oneself which causes uncomfortableness.

Having experiencing such emotions and bodily reactions and recognizing the destructive cycle of resentment and revenge, the individuals begin to find solutions to surpass the harm they suffered and then they found forgiving is preferable. While in a state of such negative emotions and found forgiving is preferable participants started to open the door for forgiveness to emerge in their mind and realized various circumstances and decided to forgive the transgressor. In their way to forgiveness there was a back and forth movement to decide to forgive in one hand and not to forgive on the other. And this back and forth movement implies deciding to forgive is very challenging and implies the decision and process of forgiveness is not an overnight task. Following the decisions to forgive these negative emotions and bodily reactions become lessened and their journey towards granting forgiveness enhanced. For example two participants develop compassion towards their offender early; they welcomed the idea of forgiveness while in a state of injury using nonviolent problem solving strategy generally, and

forgiveness specifically as a principle. In the decision and process of forgiveness participants considered varied circumstances that initiated the need to practice forgiveness.

Considering self, others and self in relationship with others and God were the source for the idea of forgiveness. Participants considered their embedment with a family and children, a relative, a neighbor, and one's own country as well as their connection with God by many kinds of affairs and they cannot easily put an end the relationship they have with these structures.

All participants concerned for their individual, family, children, neighbor well-being and their country's safety, stability, and democracy as well as for the continuity of the next generations. Participants aspire to the continuity of their families. And they found forgiveness suitable for the continuity of generations by averting the cyclical effects of resentment and revenge. They assumed the potential consequences of resentments and retribution ranging from their own wellbeing to a country and the next generation.

Time and place was an important factor in how forgiveness was experienced. Among three human right violation victims, for example, two have forgave after released from prison, though one participant implicitly do acts of forgiveness while in prison, and one has forgave after returning to his job. And four victims from interpersonal conflict have recalled the good and bad times they spent with the offender prior to the transgression. As time passes following the transgression individuals internalization of forgiveness become stronger. Forgiveness has granted after some days past following the discontinuation of the action in the case of five participants who perceived interpersonal conflict from a neighbor, brother or sisters/brothers -in- law. Here forgiveness has experienced by the participants to reverse the pre transgression relationship by focusing on the present and future relationship with the offender and his/her families.

In terms of time and place all individuals do not want to see their children and the next generation to live in holding grudges and with retribution system. Instead they need to their children and the next generation to have a bright future with peaceful environment. Another important factor was religion. Thinking that forgiveness is an expression of the individuals religion influenced them to forgive their transgressor.

In relation to religion participants except one realized the time afterlife. They believed that life in this earth is temporary, but it is eternal after pass away. And they believed that doing better things (e.g.

forgiving) results in better life in this earth and to get in to heaven after death. Thus the finiteness and infiniteness of life in this earth and heaven respectively caused participants to forgive.

Though the process towards forgiveness is more of one sided, granting it can be one way or two way communication. Four participants spoke about the shimagles, indigenous mediators who facilitated the situation so that both the forgiver and the transgressor can present physically and deal the issue. These indigenous mediators were elders, such as a parent or family member, priest, neighbor, and/or community leader. These mediators are knowledgeable, experienced about how to solve problems in general and were cognizant of the specific issue at hand and were willing to take time to listen, understand, teach, and facilitate the enabling environment to conflicting parties to deal the issue. The remaining three participants granted forgiveness intrapersonally, without directly communicating to the perpetrators.

### **The Essence of the Experience**

Here composite textual description and composite structural description of participants' experience of forgiveness are synthesized into a composite description of the phenomenon which captures the essence, or meaning ascribed to the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Forgiveness emerged as a result of an inflicted harm to the participants by others (a relative, a neighbor or government body). These harms ranged from uninformed gossip to assault to strike and to human rights violation. All participants perceived the weight of the transgression as big. The participants reacted to this harm with anger and upset at the moment. Being angry and upset they wanted and tried to revenge, and if these negative emotions prolonged and the victims immersed in the past harm, then they lived the harm in the present and making the future uncertain and hopeless. However, latter they considered and were aware the destructiveness of revenge and resentment, thereby preferred and decided to resolve the issue nonviolently, through forgiveness.

Forgiving others begins with an offended who is willing to forgive the perpetrator and either to form a meaningful relationship built on trust or not. The process to convince oneself to decide and to forgive others is not a one-time action. Though this decision to forgive was conscious it is not an end by itself. Following the decision participants go through so many mental and spiritual processes of considering varied circumstances to grant forgiveness. In such processes there was back and forth movement and it

was easy, moderate and difficult to forgive at the beginning. Thus deciding to forgive was the most challenging obstacle in the process to grant forgiveness and if once achieved it is the starting point in the process to grant forgiveness. The decision to forgive and the process to offer forgiveness, by considering various circumstances, to the perpetrator can be achieved by the forgivers' effort and/or by the help of others, shimagle, indigenous mediator and forgiveness is granted either directly communicating with the offender(s) with the presence of others or without others; or publicly (e.g. using media or any social platform) without directly communicating to the offender(s), or internally, neither directly communicating the offender(s) nor publicly without directly communicating the offender(s). The participants' forgiveness is releasing the resentments and grudges they hold against the offender thereby they end their thoughts of revenge. Thus forgiveness is a multidimensional and long process.

Once forgiveness experienced the benefits gained include free from negative affect, thought and behavior such as anger, upset, hatred, resentment, ruminating the hurt, thoughts and attempts of revenging and accusing, conflict and developed positive affect such as happiness, helping, meaningful life, peace, hope, become normal, freedom, health, and productivity as well as reconciliation and reestablished relationship. Participants who forgive intrapersonally use their resource, time and energy to build their nation with stable community, economy and politics as well as democracy instead of for retribution. Those who forgive interpersonally share any personal, social and economic issues together with the forgiven. Thus the essences of forgiving others are:

- a. The forgiver has to, at least, perceive harm by another identified person/s/
- b. Forgiving others is the offended individual's letting go of grudges with directly communicating to the offender/s (reconciled with the transgressor/s/) and thereby relationship returned to normal or without directly communicating to the offender(s) and this letting go of has ended the potential revenge and its destructive, cyclical effects
- c. The decision and process of forgiveness is multidimensional and long that can be achieved personally and/ or by the help of others though there are capability differences towards forgiveness.
- d. The forgiver released negative affect and behavior such as anger, upset, hatred, resentment, conflict, ruminating the hurt, thoughts and attempts of revenging, of accusing and developed positive affect such as happiness, meaningful life, hope, peace, feel normal and healthy, freedom and productive
- e. For the sake of one self and others that is relation of self with others and God in relative to past, present and future time with accompanied places are the main factors eliciting forgiveness

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter I summarize the whole study, position the results with reference to information in the literature review and show possible personal and social implications of the result as well as limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

#### 5.1. Summary

In chapter one I described how I became interested in studying the phenomenon forgiveness. Mandela's forgiveness of the apartheid leaders is the initial point that my mind. I discussed the spreading of transgression in this world generally and in Ethiopia particularly and the need to understand forgiveness to tackle such transgressions.

I emphasized the purpose of this study on exploring and understanding the meanings ascribed to forgiveness by the participants and how they experienced it. And this chapter showed the main questions of this study: What is the meaning individuals ascribe to their lived experiences of forgiveness? The ethical considerations such as consent of participants and epoche are stressed.

In chapter two, Nature of conflicts and responses are highlighted and relevant literatures about forgiveness reviewed. I focused on interpersonal type of forgiveness rather than intergroup forgiveness. Accordingly there has been a subtle difference on the definitions of forgiveness. It has conceptualized it in terms of cognitive, affective and behavioral aspect, motivational aspect, decisional aspect and interpersonal aspects. Whatever aspect it involves, forgiveness is the response of an offended towards an offender with goodness rather than revenge or evil. The pro social motivational nature and the benefits of forgiveness are described.

The research methodology adopted in this study explained in chapter three. By taking the social constructivism stance I employed transcendental phenomenological design which focuses more on description of the lived experiences of participants' forgiveness and not on interpreting and explaining. The key concepts in phenomenology: lived experience, intentionality, epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and essence are revealed. Noticing the lived experience is the initial

point for phenomenological research. And this experience has to be described from the view point of the participants by suspend one's own experience or prior knowledge. Further the interview technique used to gather data and purposive sampling used to select samples were explained.

In Chapter four I explicated the descriptions of eight themes developed from the individuals' significant statements and invariant constituents. These are: representation of the harm/hurt, paths to decide and grant forgiveness, refraining from activities against granting forgiveness, forgiveness entailing reconciliation, love and establishing positive relationship, forgiveness as letting go of negative feelings and/or developing positive ones, individual capability differences in forgiveness, circumstances facilitating victims' capability to forgive and forgiveness is beneficial.

I integrated composite textural description and composite structural description in to a synthesis of meanings and essences of the experiences of forgiving others and accordingly I developed five universal structures/ essences. And thus forgiving others is both a decision and process of the offended individual's letting go of grudges with or without directly communicating to the offender(s); and this letting go of has ended the potential revenge and its destructive, cyclical effects.

## **5.2. Discussion of the findings**

Having explicated my data I now relate and distinguish my study and its findings in relation to my related literature review.

The participants expression of the harm and responding it through forgiving is consistent with McCullough's (2000, 2001) finding that the risk of being offended or harmed by another person is inevitable in life and forgiving reduces the motivation of avoidance and revenge. Participants' forgiveness, in this study, emerged as a result of an inflicted harm to them by others such as a relative, a neighbor or by government body.

McCullough (2000) indicated the continuity of debate on the conceptualization of forgiveness. Forgiveness has more than one meaning to victims and such different meanings have relevance for different circumstances (Paloutzian and Kalayjian, 2009). Consistent with McCullough's (2000) and Paloutzian and Kalayjian's (2009) finding, the present study revealed that forgiveness is the offended individual's letting go of resentments and reconciled with the transgressor(s) and relationship returned to



normal or letting go of grudges without directly communicating to the offender(s); and this letting go of has ended the potential revenge. Those who define their forgiveness without directly communicating to the offenders use their resource, time and energy to build their nation with stable community, economy and politics as well as democracy instead of for retribution. Those who define their forgiveness as reconciliation share any personal, social and economic issues together with the forgiven. By using intrapersonal process and /or interpersonal process individuals grant forgiveness in a different way.

The essence that forgiveness can be achieved intrapersonally and/or interpersonally confirmed the result that forgiveness process also involves interpersonal aspects, especially in African context (Cohen, 2009; Nwoye, 2009; Paloutzian, 2009; Rutayisire, 2009; Worthington & Cowden, 2017) and the qualitative results of 11 individuals with different background and culture out of Africa by Akhtar (2015) that stated the process of intra and interpersonal forgiveness.

A complete forgiveness emerge in interpersonal or group forgiveness process whereby the opposing parties present face to face and discussed the issue with or without the presence of others (Paloutzian, 2009). Nwoye (2009) argued that in addition to the intrapersonal nature of forgiveness process it is also transactional whereby both the person doing the forgiving and the person that is forgiven as well as a witnessing community (e.g. facilitators) present and this form of interpersonal forgiveness is mature forgiveness which is achieved in dialogue. Paloutzian's (2009) and Nwoye's (2009) finding are consistent with my finding that individuals who have granted forgiveness interpersonally, face-to-face (four before shimagles and one without third party) describe their forgiveness is reconciliation and resulted in relationship returned to normal.

My study revealed that the relationship is neither returned nor worsened for the three participants who have forgiven their offenders through intrapersonal process without directly communicating the offenders. This supports the idea that "complete forgiveness" Paloutzian's (2009), "mature forgiveness" Nwoye (2009) emerged in case of face to face discussion of the issue.

The argument that forgiveness is not reconciling with the offender (Avruch, 2010; Barker, 2016; Baskin & Enright, 2004; Borris, 2003; Chubbuck, 2010; Enright, 2016; Luskin, 2006; Wade et al, 2013) is inconsistent with my finding of individuals who have forgiven through directly communicating with the offender that they have conceptualized their forgiveness in terms of reconciliation and returned relationship. But the essence that forgiving others is the offended individual's letting go of resentments

and reconciled with the transgressor(s) and relationship returned to normal is consistent with Worthington & Cowden's (2017) result that forgiveness sometimes requires reconciliation in African context where persons may consider that forgiveness requires restoration of relationships. However my result that forgiving others is the offended individual's letting go of grudges without directly communicating to the offender(s) supports the finding that forgiveness is not reconciling with the offender. An empirical phenomenological study by Mokhtar (2000) revealed that forgiving an offender is a process that starts with the forgiver's perception of being injured by another and ends in, psychological rather than face-to-face, reconciliation. Mokhtar's (2000) finding is consistent with my finding of participants who forgive intrapersonally, but is not consistent with my finding of participants who have forgiven interpersonally that the personal decision and effort with the help of others to forgive ended with face to face reconciliation.

A study by Akhtar (2015), Enright & the human development study group (1994; 1996), Wade et al (2013), and Worthington and Scherer (2004) conceptualized forgiveness as a process of reducing negative emotions, thoughts, and behaviors such as vengefulness, enmity and anger, and replacing them with more positive emotions, thoughts, and actions in the form of sympathy, compassion, love and warmth and moving to optimal functioning. And these findings confirmed the result of this study that the forgiver released negative affect and behavior such as anger, upset, hatred, resentment, conflict, ruminating the hurt, thoughts and attempts of revenging, of accusing and developed positive affect such as happiness, meaningful life, hope, peace, feel normal and healthy, feel freedom and productive.

My finding that participants have refrained from charging their offender(s) contradicted Borris's (2003) and Chubbuck's (2010) argument that forgiveness is not relinquishing or reducing legal punishment. However, this finding might be in agreement with the argument of Enright et al., (2007) that forgiveness as a social concept may end a cycle of revenge that may escalate if we insist upon justice.

The finding that forgiveness can be achieved personally and/ or by the help of others though there are capability differences towards forgiveness at the beginning: easy, moderate and difficult supported the conclusion of McCullough and Hoyt (2002; as cited in Farhadian and Emmons, 2009: 67) that "some people are dispositionally more willing to forgive than others" and confirmed the result that individual differences in the time and conditions of choosing forgiveness exists (Enright and the Human Development Study Group,1994) and the decisions to forgive did not emanate easily by Mokhtar (2000).

Avruch's (2010) finding that pressuring victims to forgive and reconcile with offenders may not be genuine and perhaps even psychologically hurtful supports the participants' account that "we have breached the reconciliation four times; unless we forgive from our heart lasting reconciliation is impossible" and the returning of the shmagles 2 times following the victims' refusal not to forgive and reconcile with the offender.

The essence that the offended individual's letting go of resentments has ended the potential revenge and its destructive, cyclical effects confirms the idea that forgiveness culminates the destructive cycle of suffering, anger, hatred, ethnic violence, conflict, and restores peace, and enables us to move forward in our life (Barker, 2016; Borris, 2003; Norman, 2017).

My finding that forgiving others is the offended individual's letting go of resentments and reconciling with the transgressor(s) and relationship returned to normal is consistent with the results that forgiving promotes and restores positive social relations which are a vital human need (Call, 2009; Enright, 2016; Lijo, 2018; McCullough, 2000; McCullough et al., 2007) and forgiveness and reconciliation reconstruct peace and promote security within and among individuals and social systems and thereby inextricably beneficial to the development of personal to societal level and reunify individuals whose relationship has been broken (Massey, 2009).

The result that forgiveness benefited forgivers to use their resource, time and energy for their present and future living is in agreement with the finding that forgiveness is choosing to regain one's life and energy to live fully and freely in the present moment (Barker, 2016) and that lack of forgiveness combined with lack of reconciliation may support stagnation (Massey, 2009).

My finding supports the result that forgiveness is an important construct for health and well-being (Akhtar, 2015; Diebel, 2012; LaMar, 2009; Lijo, 2018; Luskin, 2006; McCullough, 2001; McCullough et al, 2007; and Worthington and Scherer, 2004). Specifically four participants in this study explicitly reported feeling healthy as a result of forgiving their offender "So you feel healthy when you forgive those who wronged you, participant1"; "Forgiveness is the returning back of my mind to its normal state like the pre transgression period, participant7".

The essence that for the sake of one self and others that is relation of self with others and God are the main factors eliciting forgiveness confirmed the result that persons may forgive others for personal,

interpersonal, and/ or group interest (LaMar, 2009) and beliefs to benefit others facilitate forgiveness (Akhtar, 2015). The participants account that they have forgiven their offender for the sake of their family, of the next generation, of the offender and of their country and to maintain present and future relations confirms McCullough's (2001) conceptualization of forgiveness as "prosocial motivational change".

My research result that relation of self with God in relative to past, present and future time with accompanied places is one of the main factors eliciting forgiveness is consistent with the finding Ethiopian inclination for forgiveness can be traced to religious traditions (Levine, 2008) and with the finding that religions promote forgiveness (Akhtar, 2015; Massey and Abu-Baker, 2009 ;Worthington et al, 2015). The Awra Amba's community 'humanist philosophy' that everyone is treated as equal merely being a human by Eskinder (2013), and recognizing that human beings are worth generates forgiveness by Enright et al., (2007) and Cohen (2009) is consistent with my result that almost all of the participants view of humanity facilitated their sympathy and forgiveness. For example participant2 highly guided by "sewi lesewi liji libisi newi"; literally a human is a cloth for human.

Paloutzian's (2009) result that the more discussions between the victim and offender(s) the more forgiveness is possible confirmed my finding that relationship is returned to normal for participants who forgive by directly communicating with the offenders. Apology is helpful for forgiveness, but not a necessary condition by (LaMar, 2009) confirms this study finding that the three participants who were victims of human right violations grant forgiveness regardless of the apology by the offender and a female and the oldest participants have forgiven the wrongdoer who did not admit the wrong.

Consistent with the result that refusing responsibility for one's own wrongdoings can lead to lack of remorse and to damaged relationship (Ducommun-Nagy, 2009) and the offended taking responsibility for one's own faults enabled him/her to forgive (Akhtar, 2015) one participant has accepted the mistakes he has done during the conflict and takes responsibility and offered forgiveness by apologizing first.

People may forgive others because they accept it as their principled thing to do (LaMar, 2009). Consistent with LaMar's (2009) statement participant1 said in principle he found forgiveness very important at a country level (to have a stable community with sustainable peace, economy and politics) and he need to have this quality at personal level and accepted forgiveness as his principle.

### **5.3. Limitations of the study**

A number of limitations that are important to recognize and acknowledge in this study has identified. Firstly all samples, but one, were members of the Christian faith. Secondly except one all are men participants. Third I did not do what Moustakas (1994) said that returning the composite textural-structural descriptions to the participants to let them to check the description with what they said and with their experience is one of the validating steps in the phenomenological data analysis. There was also language limitation in the translation of the Amharic version in to English version.

To make any generalizations is not the focus in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Englander, 2012) in general and this is true for phenomenological research (Mokhtar, 2000). Thus the result of this study cannot be generalized, to other situations or experiences.

“The essence statement can only reflect a particular time, place, and the experiences of the individuals interviewed” (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004: 24) and as this study adopted the social constructivism worldview to replicate the finding may be difficult.

### **5.4. Social and personal implications**

For Husserl Phenomenological study provides the basis to construct reliable knowledge (Eagleton, 1996; Moustakas, 1994). Understanding of what forgiveness is and is not is an essential step in moving forward into forgiveness (Norman, 2017). Exploring the concept of forgiveness is important to end the cycle of violence and revenge (Barker, 2016; Borris, 2003). The essences of this study would help others to understand what forgiveness is from the viewpoint of the participants so that they can go further to create and develop reliable knowledge of forgiveness and apply in their daily interactions. And my study would be a springboard towards this nonviolent solution, forgiving others that enable forgivers free from grudges and to get out of the existing retaliation culture and build peace in the community.

A first step towards forgiveness is having information that forgiveness exists, is an option for every one and learning how to apply forgiveness (Oliver, 2013). Reconciliation and forgiveness found everywhere; however we overlooked such ordinary, but essential things to enduring relationships and therefore it becomes difficult to understand (Massey, 2009). My finding tried to search the overlooked forgiveness and provided an insight that persons in Ethiopia employed forgiveness to solve their real life dispute and

have benefited from using it, and it is available for every one and can be applied with/without communicating to the offender.

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed” (UNESCO Constitution, n.d.). Peaceful and violent actions are outcomes of individuals (Paloutzian & Kalayjian, 2009). My study showed individuals resolved the problems by forgiving the offenders and live peacefully. This implies that individual forgiveness is core for those concerned with the construction of peace nonviolently.

Forgiveness is a foundation for reconciliation (Avruch, 2010; Massey, 2009; Rutayisire, 2009) and supports democracy (Ben-Porath, 2005). My finding clearly indicate that forgiveness is the grass roots for reconciliation, and the possibility of reconciliation and democracy is less likely without forgiveness. For example participant1&3 stated “we have breached the reconciliation four times; unless we forgive from our heart lasting reconciliation is impossible” and forgiveness is “necessary to bring democracy” to Ethiopia respectively. Thus my finding provided clues that forgiveness is valuable to build lasting peace in the community and in a country level thereby a nation can develop democracy.

German psychiatrist Albrecht Mahr suggested that large group issues are deeply interconnected with individual real people (Cohen, 2009). Fehr & Gelfand (2010) indicated the role of forgiveness in preventing the escalation of conflicts and showed the self in the peace process even at the group level. The Awra Amba community gives attention including the slightest disagreement so that they deal it properly and keep the community’s internal peace (Eskinder, 2013). The finding of this study that individuals’ letting go of resentments has ended the potential revenge and its destructive, cyclical, unlimited effects has an implication for the larger group. That is the individual forgiving another person has resolved the problem at the spot and as a result the potential escalation of the conflict into groups to the society terminated and the community can keep its peace. This result also indicated that giving attention for individual case is fundamental for community peacebuilding.

Massey (2009) described that disagreement started in small has “ripple effects” which often endures over time and across generations. A study by Eneyew (2013) also revealed the presence of a perpetrator-victim cycle of revenge. Conflict can deepen and divided a society if not rectified (Enright, 2016). Unresolved injustices committed in one generation results in the next generation to drawn into the fight (Cohen, 2009). My result that the offended individual’s letting go of grudges has ended the potential

revenge and its destructive, cyclical effects or relationship returned to normal directly implies that it ended the perpetrator-victim cycle of revenge, deepening of conflict and the “ripple effect” of disagreements started in small and thereby the community can maintain peace and free the next generation from engaging in conflict.

Forgiveness and reconciliation maintain positive relationship, reconstruct peace and promote security within and among individuals and social systems and thereby inextricably beneficial to the development of personal to societal level (Massey, 2009). In the community concerned with human development, together with justice, forgiveness is a construct that deserves attention at personal and societal level (Enright & the human development study group, 1994). My finding that the offended individual’s letting go of grudges has ended the potential revenge and its destructive, cyclical effects has an implication to deserve attention for forgiveness in order to build and sustain peace and develop together at personal, familial, and societal level. It would be an initial point for policy makers towards the preservation and/or establishment of social structures and institutions which prevent the chains of harm and violence while promote forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.

“Gandhi has said that if true peace is ever to be achieved in communities, then we must begin with the children” (Enright, et al, 2007:23.). Enright & the human study development group (1994, 1996) emphasized the significance to expose the early adolescents for such concepts as unconditionality, inherent equality and forgiveness. Thus the outcome of this study may alert teachers and other stakeholders (e.g. policy makers) to formulate a policy that advocate forgiveness towards children and youths so that they can develop their knowledge and ability about forgiveness and strive to build peace. Thus the individuals’ forgiveness has the potential to teach children and youths by example and to end the revenge system that transferred from generation to generation. As a result, children and youths can learn resolving disagreements nonviolently and they can achieve peace.

Sesay (2016) stated that lack of competency, knowledge and/or capacity is one major limitation of “Do-it-Yourself” (DIY) and some DIY tasks need assistance from others (e.g. family member(s) or neighbor(s)) to perform the task successfully. Participants have described different level of forgiveness capacity at the beginning. This difference has an implication that parents, religious leaders, educators, peace practitioners, counselors and social workers and indigenous mediators have to knowledge and experience of forgiveness to make forgiveness successful and lasting peace would maintained.

Clement (1997) emphasized the need for dialogue, for example, between persons locked into cultures of violence and persons working to build cultures of peace, between learned and unlearned and between ancient and modern wisdom. አብዮታዊ ግንኙነት (2010 E.C) underlined the need to study indigenous wisdom in order to find satisfactory solutions for questions regarding public, government and country affairs (translated). Levine (2008) stated the presence of much grudges in the society in Ethiopia that need discussion in good spirit. My study result indicated the need to bring individuals forgiveness experience and use it to discuss between cultures of retribution and individuals' forgiveness, between this forgiveness wisdom and the justice system in resolving conflicts so that to create a culture of peace.

Personally as a peace and security study graduate this research is relevant for me that it has equipped me the considerations and ways to understand and practice it as well as the relevance gained from forgiveness. I found forgiveness suitable to go over the locked cultures of revenge where I live in and to attend “individuals working to build cultures of peace”.

Generally, Campbell (2017) and Paloutzian & Kalayjian (2009) indicated forgiveness and reconciliation as key topics for long term peace and stability. Thus my research finding implied the need to give attention for forgiveness to build peace in the community.



## 5.5. Conclusions

Except a work by Levine (2008) entitled “The promise of Ethiopia: Public action; civic forgiveness; creative power” there are no research done on forgiveness in Ethiopia. I am confident to say forgiveness issues in Ethiopia are relatively new. Thus this phenomenological research may be hoped as an initiation alarm to study the area of forgiveness using both qualitative and quantitative approach in Ethiopia. From these two approaches, as the issue of forgiveness is new in Ethiopia, my interest is to focus on the qualitative one (e.g. using narrative, ethnography, phenomenological) in order to investigate the lived experiences of individuals’ or groups’ and cultures’ forgiveness and then quantitative study will be employed to expand knowledge to build peace and enhance relations in Ethiopian context. My finding revealed both the intra and interpersonal nature of forgiveness (Nwoye, 2009; Paloutzian, 2009; Worthington & Cowden, 2017). And those who use the interpersonal nature of forgiveness in this study consider it requiring reconciliation. Thus the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation needs more clarification in Ethiopian context across different cultures and backgrounds. For example, Worthington & Cowden (2017) explained that forgiveness sometimes requires reconciliation in African context. And also the application of interpersonal forgiveness has to be clarified according to our country context.

This study showed that participants have refrained from charging their offender(s) following their decision to forgive and offering forgiveness which contradicted Borris’s (2003) and Chubbuck’s (2010) argument that forgiveness is not relinquishing legal punishment. So this finding needs more study to enhance these two concepts to function interdependently for sustainable peace.

The decision and process of forgiveness is multidimensional and long that can be achieved personally and/ or by the help of others. To forgive personally as well as to help others to forgive requires both knowledge and experience of forgiveness to be successful. One participant stated that forgiveness is teaching children by example about nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms so that children can grow by practicing forgiveness and maintain peace. The essences that forgiving others is the offended individual’s letting go of grudges with directly communicating to the offender/s (reconciled with the transgressor/s/) and thereby relationship returned to normal or without directly communicating to the offender(s) and this letting go of has ended the potential revenge and its destructive, cyclical effects need to be given attention so that the community can build peace and its nation.

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## Appendix A: Interview guide

Topic: exploring individual's lived experience of forgiveness in Ethiopia and its implication for community peacebuilding

### A qualitative interview guide

Interview code\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Venue\_\_\_\_\_

Time: from\_\_\_\_\_ to\_\_\_\_\_

This interview asks you to describe your experiences of forgiveness about an offence committed on you.

በዚህ ቃለ-መጠይቅ እርስዎ ተጎጂ/ ተበዳይ ሆነው ይቅር ያለብትን ተግባር እንዲገልጹ ይጠየቃሉ :

1. What was the offense or injury that you experienced your forgiveness? What was your response when you injured or offended against? Can you describe in detail as much as possible, please?  
ይቅርታዎን የተገበሩበት በእርስዎ ላይ የደረሰው በደል/ ጉዳት ምድን ነበር? በተጎዱ/በተናደዱ ጊዜ ምላሽዎ ምን ነበር? እባክዎ በተቻለ ማክኑ በዝርዝር ይግለጹት?
2. Was it possible for you to forgive? ይቅር ለማለት ለእርስዎ ተቻይ ነበር?
3. How did/ do you experience your forgiveness? ይቅርታዎን የተገበሩት/ እየተገበሩት ያለው/ እንዴት ነው?
4. What factors facilitated your experience of forgiveness in relation to the situation you described?  
የገለጹትን በደል ይቅር እንዲሉ እገዛ ያደረጉልዎ/ ያፋጠኑልዎ ሁኔታዎች ምድን ናቸው?
5. What value did this experience of forgiveness have on your life? ይቅር በማለትዎ በህይወትዎ ላይ ምን ወገኑ አገኙ?
6. What is forgiveness mean to you? ይቅር ማለት ለእርስዎ ምን ማለት ነው?
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about which we haven't covered in this interview that you feel is important for me to know? በዚህ ቃለ-መጠይቅ ቀረ የሚገኙና አንት ብቃዎቻው ጠቃሚ ነው ብለው የሚገኙበት ነገር ካለ

## Appendix B: Relevant statements

There have been so many human right violations committed on me, but I do not want to express them in detail. However, the offences that have been inflicted on my children and wife were more painful than the injury inflicted on me

One day my 4<sup>th</sup> younger brother hid himself in the trees around the road and hit me while I am passing through that road. Right after the occasion I was unconscious, even I did not see who has hit me. “The upset and the sadness that I felt are due to the idea that why he made such kind of ugly action on me

As a human still I feel disappointed somewhat when I think of the human right violations committed on me

Beyond the stone the offender thrown at me his degrading insult caused me to attach this occasion with my past natural unpleasant occasion and started to blame my fate. And consequently my heart has been broken; even though his insult was too extreme immoral, I tried my best to manage and control my behavior while calling God to help both the offender and me giving ‘libona’, literally heart.

Living in conflict with a neighbor is “ye ayitina dimet nuro, cat and rat like living. It was a living full of suspicion. The harm was grave; difficult to list the details of the harm.

For me it was just easy to forgive; it did not take me time to forgive for the harms inflicted on me. Though I have had some pain of seeing harms towards my wife and children this pain is nothing when you love your country. I believe in national reconciliation and forgiveness and I was the proponent of forgiveness before I had been jailed. Thanks to God, I believe I have the quality of courage and moral intelligence to forgive. ...I am sacrificing and ready to scarify for forgiveness.

Thinking of as a human being, older brother and of familial conditions I found forgiveness just simple and best choice.

kesewu ye miyameliti yelem yibalal”, literally nothing has remain undone from humans. Thinking of futurity made me possible to forgive.

Though I became very upset at the moment, latter I thought it was not good to respond in a way that I responded. It was possible to forgive the offender who harmed me

Following the hurt you may experience disappointment which challenged your forgiveness. Forgiveness is not just simple that you forgive once when you need. You have to struggle your reoccurred feeling of upset and forgive daily.

I had spent around 40 years in conflict with my neighbor due to my inability to forgive; we have breached reconciliation four times. And this is key implication for the difficulty to forgive. Unless we forgive from our heart lasting reconciliation is impossible.

...it was very difficult for me to forgive. I have refused the shimagles 2 times when they tried to help me to forgive and to reconcile with the offender.

...one who governs oneself is greater than one who administers a city. As a human being, I need to govern, to respect, to correct, and to civilize myself and to be modern Ethiopian. I need to my beloved country to have a community with stable peace, economy and politics; thereby the people live in equally.

When I was in hospital I have already started to forgive my brother; ...I prohibited my sons while they planned to hit and/or to charge the offender.

I convinced myself just to forgive and not to revenge those who harmed me and I have forgiven them implicitly

After I found no one who tried to facilitate the reconciliation between me and the offender I decided to go to him and forgive whether he accept me or hit me....I told him that ... I have forgiven you and came to you.

... I decided to forgive.... I convince myself not to dispute with the offender but rather to discuss the issue with him and his family if I perceive he wronged me again. Then I told ...to shimagles that I need to reconcile with my offender... by apologizing him of my past misdeeds I have forgiven him in front of the shimagles without any precondition

I have told what I believe in whatever opportunity I got when I was in prison. After I released from prison I have openly discussing the complaint in any opportunity I got; I have written about my forgiveness, I have expressed my forgiveness in different medias that I have forgave... and I do not want to charge them

...In another day he and me met each other and discussed the issue, blamed each other and strengthen our forgiveness.

I forgave her before the shimagles following I told her the transgressions that she caused on me.

Following the discontinuity of such atrocity I officially (through media) have forgiven those who harmed me whether they are alive or not.

Forgiveness enabled us to avoid ... revenge in Amharic 'Dem melash'. Personally I have no hate towards others who wronged me.

The shimagles, facilitated ways to bring the offender and me face-to- face so that we discuss the issue and thereby the offender apologized and I forgave him. After I forgave my brother I assured to him before the Shimagle that I do not need any compensation, even the cost I incurred for medication of the injury

The shimagles has told the offender you were wrong and you should compensate; accordingly the offender accepted and did what the shimagles said. Then I forgave him in front of the shimagles and we bless each other.

The endeavor effort and advice of shimagles enabled me to forgive and reconcile with the wrongdoer and thereby I restored the prior relationship. My husband's effort and action to live with me helped me to forgive my offender

Before I explicitly forgave him I did not wish any unpleasant thing to the offender; instead I had advised and convinced my wife to leave the crops...I wish for him a good chance in his day to day activity and want to see him in a good position in his living.

As an elder I have to mediate others who are in conflict; so to make my mediation acceptable and fruitful by others I have to forgive first.

I do not charge the offenders, even I do not witness against them if the prosecutor attorney request me to do so. When I become older and weak I started to think of my God. I started to think of the fate of my soul. Praying without letting go of grudges is just vain.

Before the incident we are friends, neighbors, colleagues and we were stand in one side when argument is raised in the place where we live and work in. It is difficult to describe the prior relationship we have had.

We have spent so many happiest times as well as difficult times. In my life experience I have never ever seen anyone, including me, who has benefited from revenge.

When I live with grudges around 40 years I have got nothing benefit instead it has been full of disadvantage. Generally holding resentment and revenge is like “fire in ash” and as a result the damage is uncertain that will hurt both intended and unintended parties in an unspecified time and place .

I believe that the benefit gained from forgiveness is greater than its drawback and this benefit can transfer from generation to generation. Forgiveness is necessary to bring democracy

I forgave to normalize the present and future living of me and my family as well as the living of the offender and his family.

tidare, thinking of my living and family, and azuro mayet, looking things differently have facilitated my forgiveness

If I would not forgive, I thought it would harm me as long as I live in this earth and after death

My wife can go to her brother’s home when she wants but her brother cannot came to his sister home as he is in conflict with me

When I think it again and again the revenges that I want to do will have an impact on my family as well as the offender’s family who have no any idea in the harm inflicted on me.

I never want to transfer such painful living with a neighbor to my children.

My unforgiveness may lead me to divorce and as a result my children may be hurt and disintegrated.

After that incident the offender has said and did nothing towards my family even when my children are trying to hit or charge him. The only thing I expected from my brother was remorse

The offender has stopped by his side to arrange a place to hit me and started to regret



You have to love others as your brother and sister just in their humanity. If a lion eat a lion, it cannot feel the pain inflicted on the one being eaten. But humans can feel the pain.

As a 4<sup>th</sup> older brother I understand my brothers feeling and it was only me who understand the feeling of the pain resulting from the injury.

When I think of the living of the offender I felt something inside my heart.

At country level it is known where holding grudge takes us. Unless it is through reconciliation and forgiveness, using resentment and revenge is endless.

For me choosing revenge is declaring harm on one's own body, children, family, neighbor and property in unspecified time and place. Preferring to respond harm through revenge is like adding gas in fire so that it intensifies and burnt both of us.

The offender may die if I hit him, and as a result I may be forced to displace or to be sentenced life-time punishment. While I am trying to revenge him he may hit me and I may die. Consequently the fate of my family is disintegration.

I spent my time and energy thinking of how to revenge the offender; even I had stopped to work for five –six days. You can get nothing from revenge except temporary happiness which results in life-span regret and sadness.

In thinking to revenge my offender I hurt the offender's herds, crops, children and relatives who have no any intention on the harm inflicted on me; and this is the miserable side of revenge on those who have no any connection to the transgression.

That time onwards, our families' relationship has rebuilt and continued until today in times of happiness and hardship

Conflict with a neighbor is harmful; it does not come to you at times of shouting for help; it does not help at times of sickness; it does not share food with you etc. My forgiveness to my neighbor has ended these disadvantages

I eat food and drink water with my neighbor, we help each other, we together resolve any problem faced us; we share any hardship as well as happiness.

I have got care from the offender when I gave birth as well as my children's have getting care from my offender more than me.

My forgiveness has a positive response to me; I am happy; ...people who like me become increasing gradually

I wish positive things to my brother. I wish good things alike for my family and his family.

I empathize when I heard something wrong has been occurred against the offender.

My happiness is boundless when I see that my children and offender's children are playing and helping with the

If I had not forgiven the offenders I would always suspicious of even my shadow....

Living with grudges is like rotating by carrying 100 kilogram teff. Grudge is a heavy burden. I became a free person; free from the burden of grudge. I believe I substituted the pessimistic thinking resulting from holding grudges, with hope. Since I am moving with hope I make peace with myself.

if I had not able to forgiven the offenders who inflicted a satanic action on me, I would have ruminated this negative thing again and again and these negative thoughts would have digest me

You cannot move just a step if you have resentment and revenge. Your mind never felt peace when you hold grudge and you cannot be productive. So you feel healthy when you forgive those who wronged you.

I am spending no time in thinking of the hurt that happened on me; but rather I use my energy and time to lead my present and future living.

...my children are getting any fresh crops because the offender sees them as equal to his children.

Forgiveness is not costly and it is in my hand

I am living peaceful life. I asleep with peace; it does not matter even if I leave the door open.

Peace with a neighbor is impossible unless we forgive from our heart. Currently I live peacefully with my neighbor. My families are playing with my neighbor's family peacefully and they help each other whatever thing with trust.

I feel happiness, caring my children in peace; we live in peace

I have got respect from others gradually. People are being appreciating my forgiveness

I gained surprising respect from the neighbors. When there is disagreement around ...I am selected to mediate the situation. To this end all conflicting parties listen and internalize what I am saying or advice

I am happy with my marriage and got additional children. I have got my half house and my half living become full.

I feel I did something good in my life. I feel as a full person

My forgiveness is about love; love never consider grudge; you have to love others as your brother and sister just in their humanity; you have not to count the harms inflicted on you by others.

Forgiveness is agreement with the offender; it is the returning back of my mind to its normal state like the pre transgression period. It has respect and love. Forgiveness is getting suitable place by God.

Forgiveness is a process of convincing oneself to not consider the offender's past wrong inflicted on me and reconciling with the offender thereby the pre transgression relationship back. .

Forgiveness is the process of struggling the feeling of disappointment and forgiving others to be forgiven by God. Though I am sinful he [God] forgives me.

...forgiving is not about the past; rather it is about the present and future life and relationship...

Forgiveness is leaving the issue for God and forgiving the offender as God does not like revenge and resentment. Forgiveness is let go of the wrongs I have suffered from this time onwards and starting the prior relationships.

Forgiveness is a decision and process to set free myself from the resentment and revenge that I have pregnant of for many years against the offender and not to hold a new dislikes and vowing it to myself and to God and confirming it before the transgressor and council of members

## **Appendix C: Individual textural-structural descriptions of participants' experiences of forgiveness**

### **Individual textural-structural descriptions of participant1's experiences of forgiveness**

While I am in jail the offences that have been inflicted on my children and wife was more painful than the injury inflicted on me. When they came to see me I want to hug and kiss them, but it was impossible. As that time I felt very sorrow. There have been so many human right violations committed on me, but I do not want to express them in detail. I had been prohibited from the rights that are allowed to others. Generally, the aim of the offenders was, ተስፋ ቆርጫላን ግጥም እንደደፋና ይቅርታ እንደጠየቅ ነበር, to make me hopeless and to down my head so that to make apology. Many bodies working in the government involved in the transgression.

By directly telling what he believes in as well as his/her complaint, participant1 has been experiencing forgiveness implicitly in a continuing harm in prison. "My arrest strengthened my principle in forgiveness habit"; "by refraining from any physical fight and unnecessary verbal confrontation I had told the offender what I believe in whatever opportunity I got when I was in prison". And after he released from prison he has openly discussed the complaint and assured the forgiveness in any opportunity he got. "I am writing about my forgiveness, I have expressed my forgiveness in different Medias and podium that I have forgiven those who harmed me and that I do not want to charge them; though the aim of justice is to teach the wrongdoers, in my personal stance you have not to charge those you once forgive them. If you charge those who you forgive, where forgiveness is granted? Personally I do not need to charge those who harmed me" For participant1 forgiveness has been granted publicly towards more than one offender, but not directly communicating to the offenders.

I have had no any hate towards those who hurt me because at the beginning I am governed to the principle of peaceful struggle. "My forgiveness is about love: the "Bible said 'love never considers grudges'. When I advocate peaceful struggle, it is about love. You have to love others as your brother and sister just in their humanity; you have not to count the harms inflicted on you by others If you really believe in the power within love". For participant1 forgiveness is about 'love'

For me it was just easy to forgive; it did not take me time to forgive for the harms inflicted on me. Firstly as a politician I recognize no option other than forgiveness to forward a country; that is why I advocate forgiveness. I became a politician as I want to see fair distribution of resources and power.

Secondly as human being forgiveness is greatness. I assure my greatness through forgiving others. And finally though I have had some pain of seeing harms towards my wife and children this pain is nothing when you love your country. Personally I believe in national reconciliation and forgiveness and I was the proponent of forgiveness before I jailed.

In principle I found forgiveness very important at a country level and I need to have this quality at personal level. Tebibu Solomon said ‘someone who governs oneself is greater than someone who administers a city’. Thus, እንደ ሰው ልጅ ራስን ማሰፅ፣ ራስን ማከበር፣ ራስን ማተካከል፣ ራስን ማቆጣጠርና ራስን ማሰጠን ለሰው ዋና ጉልበቶች ናቸው፣ as a human being to respect, to correct, to control and to civilize oneself are the main energies for humans. Thus I need to have these qualities and to be modern Ethiopian. The biggest quality that labeled humans as human is the ability to forgive. If a lion eat a lion, it cannot feel the pain inflicted on the one being eaten. But humans can feel the pain being inflicted. At a country level, if you like Ethiopia you have to forgive though you have some pain. I have to sacrifice for my country. I need to my beloved country to have a community with stable peace, economy and politics; thereby the people live in equally. People who are exemplar (like Mandela, Martin Luter king, Ghandi etc) in this world are those who had forgiven others not who kill humans. Of course forgiveness needs courage and moral intelligence to forgive and thanks to God I believe I have this quality. When reconciliation is done and added on forgiveness and when we discuss as people and as a country we can correct the country we dream in the coming era.

I believe we need to be free from the retribution system (e.g. Dem-melash)... transferred to us from generation to generation. At country level it is known where holding grudge takes us. You cannot move just a step if you have resentment and revenge. Forgiveness enabled us to avoid our resentment and hate that we hold on. Unless it is through reconciliation and forgiveness, using resentment and revenge is endless. I do not want to seize or stay in power by killing one’s own brothers or sons.

In the bible, Dawit expressed the age of human beings is 70-80. Of course I wish to live longer as others wish; but death is inevitable. Thus I questioned why I do better things as long as I live in this world?

Though some criticized me of being forgiving such a huge hurt, in general however, my forgiveness has a positive response to me; I am happy. Some people said me “how it is difficult to us to forgive if you forgive such huge hurt”. The number of people who like me become increasing gradually. When you forgive then others respect you gradually. I think now the People are buying my forgiveness through

time. People in all walks of life are being appreciating this. You feel healthy when you forgive those who wronged you. Your mind did not feel peace when you hold grudge and you cannot be productive.

Living in a country where retribution system that transferred from generation to generation is prevalent, where unfair distribution of power and resources is rampant through killing of a father or sons, an awareness of self and the inevitability of death are the main factors enabled the participant to make forgiveness his principle.

### **Individual textural-structural descriptions of participant2's experiences of forgiveness**

For participant2 the transgression inflicted on him was ugly. "One day my 4<sup>th</sup> younger brother hid himself in the trees around the road and hit me while I am passing through that road". Right after the occasion he was unconscious, even he did not see who has hit him. He becomes conscious after the people around there brought him from where he fell off. After he has knew the perpetrator he felt upset and sadness. "The upset and the sadness that I felt are due to the idea that why my younger brother made such kind of ugly action on me". The injury was kidney infection and as a result he stayed in hospital more than a month. In hospital participant2 did not felt hatred and held resentment and revenge towards the one who caused physical harm on him.

Participant2 already started his forgiveness towards the offender while he was in hospital. However he expected the offender to show remorse in order to grant complete forgiveness. He prohibited his sons when he heard that his sons are planning to hit and/or to charge the offender.

After I returned back some individuals came to me and asked me to reconcile with my offender. My response was very positive as my interest was to resolve the issue peacefully. After both the offender and I brought before the 'Shimagle', the offender expressed his remorse and apologize me. As a result I granted forgiveness to him by saying I forgive you. And also I assured to him and for the Shimagle that I do not need any compensation, even the cost I incurred for medication of the injury; instead what I need is your love. For participant2 complete forgiveness is achieved by the help of others, shimagles even though he had decided and started behaviors of forgiveness. Participant2 defined his forgiveness as a process of convincing oneself and deciding not to hold bitterness on the offender and reconciling with him so that the forgiver accompanying with his family can conduct the daily interactions and activities with the offender alike the pre transgression time. Consequently that time onwards the relationship

between the forgiver and forgiven with their accompanying families has rebuild and continued until today in times of happiness as well as hardship.

Reconciling with the offender so that my family and me can conduct the daily interactions and activities with the offender alike the pre transgression one.

When he thought of as a human being, older brother, temporariness of life as well as familial conditions Participant2 found forgiveness just simple and best choice. The complexity that the dispute between the offended and the offender caused on the remaining family of them had instigated the offended to forgive. For instance the offender is living with his and the offended parents and help them. Preferring to respond harm through revenge is like adding gas in fire so that it intensifies and burnt both the victim and offender along with their families. Participant2 as an Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido follower, believe that doing better things (e.g. forgiving others) is the primary way to put ones' soul in heaven and he believe living in this earth is just temporary, but living in Eden is eternal. For participant2 life becomes better both in earth and heaven if we are forgiver.

My principle is highly guided by “ሰው ለሰው ልጅ ልብነት ነው፣ sewi lesewi liji libisi newi”; literally a human is a cloth for human. That is valuing humans first enabled to pass whatever hardship you faced including the devil. Doing good things in this earth will have good results (e.g. it brings better relationship between or among neighbors; thinking of living without neighbors is just naïve. As a 4<sup>th</sup> older brother I understand my brothers feeling and it was only me who understand the feeling of the pain resulting from the injury. In my life experience I have never ever seen anyone, including me, who has benefited from revenge. For me choosing revenge is declaring harm on one's own body, children, family, neighbor and property in unspecified time and place. Preferring to respond harm through revenge is choosing to aggravate the harm and to let to extend to others. Due to this I am employing nonviolent solutions for any dispute as my daily guide.

There were Shimagles. The shimagle facilitated the situation to bring the offended and the offender to deal the issue face to face and the offender to remorse and apologize, not the forgiver as he already decided to forgive. Thus she shimagles have facililitated the apology by the offender. Here in order to facilitate granting forgiveness shimagles have raised the issue of compensation; but the offended refused it as his precondition was only to see remorse from the offender and his goal is to return back their pre-conflict relationship:

I have no negative feelings towards the offender; I have no any suspicion towards the offender; I freely go to the offender's house and use freely whatever meals presented to me. I am free; I move freely wherever I go. If I were not forgiven I would always suspicious of even my shadow especially at night in thinking that the offender is following me to attack again. Instead I wish positive things for both of us. As a result I spent no time in thinking of the actions that happened on me;

Above all I gained surprising respect from the neighbors. When there is any disagreement around the neighbors most of the time I have selected to mediate the situation. To this end all conflicting parties listen and internalize my advice. And indeed most of all the mediation process that I have participated in has been concluded with reconciliation. When I see such outcome my happiness and satisfaction is deep. I feel internal peace as I did not think of the actions that happened on me.

### **Individual textural-structural descriptions of participant3's experiences of forgiveness**

While I was working my legal work I was arrested by police using false charge and I have faced human right violations in prison by government bodies. The violation was against humanity. As a human being you feel upset when you injured. I was disappointed at the time. Even some days later the injury, I feel upset again and again.

Participant3 started his decision and process to forgive the offenders after he has released from prison. Even though I did not tell the offenders openly that I have forgiven you I have forgiven them internally. I convince myself just to forgive and not to revenge those who harmed me. I always struggle the feeling to revenge the offenders. For participant3 forgiveness is a continuous personal process, it does not grant once. He struggles with the negative feelings such as disappointment and the need to revenge and assures forgiveness always. Not accusing the offenders is one means used by participant3 to assure his forgiveness, "I do not charge the offenders, even I do not witness against them if the prosecutor attorney request me to do so". For him forgiveness is a choice, but to apply his forgiveness choice faced a challenge from the reoccurring disappointments after he told for himself he had forgiven the offenders. For him forgiveness is the process of struggling the feeling of disappointment and forgiving others unconditionally to be forgiven by God. "The reoccurring disappointment may challenge your forgiveness. Forgiveness is not just simple that you forgive once when you need. You have to forgive daily; you have to struggle your reoccurrence feeling of upset and say forgive".



For participant3 the benefits gained from forgiveness are more than its drawback. And this benefit can transfer from generation to generation. He believes forgiveness is significant to his aim to bring democracy for his country, Ethiopia. “I believe forgiveness is necessary to fulfill my aim that I stand for”. The benefit that forgiveness caused for a country and the next generation underlaid participant3’s forgiveness.

I am a Christian and as a Christian follower I believe it is a moral obligation to forgive others. The belief that God has forgiven me and will forgive me without any precondition has influenced me to forgive others without any precondition.

ቂጥጥ በቀል ማዞዝ ማቶ ኪሎ ግራም ጠፍ ተሽከሞ እንደሚሆን ነው፣ living with grudges is like rotating by carrying 100 kilogram Teff. Holding grudges made you pessimistic throughout your life.

Grudge is a heavy burden; however, I become free from such heavy burden of grudge. I believe I substituted the pessimistic thinking resulting from holding grudges with hope; I became a free person. Since I am moving with hope I make peace with myself. Holding grudges participant3 become hopeless and pessimistic and even holding grudge is a very heavy load that he equates with 100 kilogram Teff which is of course impossible to carry always, even a minute and move. As a result participant3 choose forgiveness to relieve from such burdens and to avoid his pessimistic ideas and substituted with hope so that he can envision the present and future regardless of the past.

### **Individual textural-structural descriptions of participant4’s experiences of forgiveness**

There has been a disagreement between my wife and her brother in land issue. When my wife gave the court’s charge letter to her brother he tore it down, insult me and thrown a stone at me to hit my head. Even though his insult was too extreme immoral, I tried my best to manage and control my behavior while calling God to help and to give both me and the offender ‘libona’, literally heart. In such a way at the moment I defend myself and shouted by saying ‘yehig yaleh’/ ‘behig amlak’, literally “by law of God” for help and to make him under the laws. While seeing that some people (militia, local law enforcement and ordinary) are coming, my brother-in-law runaway and lost. Of course beyond the stone the offender thrown at me his degrading insult caused me to attach this occasion with my past natural unpleasant occasion and started to blame my fate. And consequently my heart has been broken

Then after my wife has got the court decision, without the defendant's presence, of her share land with crops it has on it. Then I refused my wife's decision to take the then crop, and advised her getting the land is just enough so let your brother use the current crop: As a result his wife has leaved the crops to her brother. "Before I explicitly forgave him I did not wish any unpleasant thing to the offender; instead I had advised and convinced my wife to leave the crops, for her brother that the court decided to her; of course I was against my wife when she charged her brother".

However, even though participant4's wife has reconstructed her relationship with her brother, his relationship remained broken. Though he internally needed to reconcile with the offender and waiting someone who tried to facilitate the reconciliation between him and the offender, participant4 did not found anyone. In such a situation more than one year has passed. Then he discussed with himself and recognized that he is living with his offenders sister, he have children with her as well as "እኔ ፀሐይን ከበዳዩ ቀድሞ አወቃታለሁ; ene kersu jumbern kedime awuqalehu" literally I am the one who know the sun prior to him [offender]", meaning I am older than him, which is recognizing maturity to take responsibility especially when something wrong occurred between or among individuals. As a result he decided to go to the offender's house and forgive.

Having decided to forgive the offender and spent more than a year waiting others and found nobody who tried to mediate him with the offender, participant4 has granted his forgiveness by go to the house of the offender. "After I found no one who tried to facilitate the reconciliation between me and the offender, I decided to go to him and forgive him whether he accept me or hit me. When I arrived to the wrongdoer's home I told him that no one has tried to reconcile you and me; so ያለፈው በደል ይቅር ገዥ ጭቻለሁ ስለው በደንጋጤ ተቀበለኝ, I have forgiven you and came to you, he accepted me with high shock. And we talked the details of the past occasion and have reopened the pre-transgression relations". In this forgiveness processes all the efforts has been personal, but at the end there is receiving of the forgiveness by the offender with high shock. On his way to grant forgiveness participant4 used two and half hour by foot to arrive to the offender's house. For him granting forgiveness is difficult without contacting the offender physically.

It is true that "ለላፈ ክረምት ቤት አይሰራም, lalefe kiremit bet ayeseram" literally building a house for the past winter is impossible. The same is true for forgiveness; my decision to grant forgiveness is not about the past; rather it is about the present and future life and relationship; Forgiveness is not only refraining

from wishing and/or doing bad things towards the offender but it is also restarting or developing positive relations too. Of course my forgiveness was “Enigida”, strange for many people the offender and me as the usual forgiveness process has been conducted through “shimiglina” by which most of the time the forgiver needs apology. However, I found my forgiveness without third party fruitful and not costly. “kesewu ye miyameliti yelem yibalal”, literally nothing has remain undone from human. Thus, it is possible to forgive.

My wife can go to her brother’s home when she wants but her brother cannot come to his sister home as he is in conflict with me. I forgave to normalize the present and future living of me and my family as well as the living of the offender and his family.

Our living in this world is temporary. So doing better things for the next generation is good. And I need to see my children in a better position in this world as well. In this earth life is short as a single individual. But as a generation it is continual. Thus I need the continuation of my children in this earth. So life in this earth is not only for a single individual but the collaboration of many others. If so we have to bother the continuation of our children and this believe has influence my forgiveness highly.

As an Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido follower I believe that doing better things (e.g. forgiving others) is the primary way to put my soul in heaven. I believe living in this earth is just temporary, but living in Eden is eternal (2 participants). Praying without letting go of grudges is just vain (Participant4).

I share whatever happiness and hardship p with my brother-in-law; I empathize when I heard something wrong has been occurred against the offender. I feel free when I meet with him; I have no any sense of upset. I feel internal peace as I did not think ofs the actions that happened on me. My happiness is boundless when I see that my children are playing and helping with the offenders children. I wish good things alike for my family and his family. We discuss how to lead our families’ day to day living. I am happy with my marriage and got additional children. I have got my half house; thereby my half living becomes full. Though I live in small town my children get any fresh crops because the offender gives to them as equal to his children.

## **Individual textural-structural descriptions of Participant5's experiences of forgiveness**

There was one neighbor- not in terms of distance but in terms of activities in which we meet each other by Hazen and Idir, Mahiber, as well as he is my work colleague. We know each other when we are in “ye-kolo timihirit bet”, clergy school. In the work place we are in the same position and labeled as the youngest priest in the work place. As a result he and I usually have the same stand when argumentative issues rose in the “Sebeka”, the place where those two priests are sanctifies. We help each other mostly. Most of the time people consider a neighbor as those next to their door or house, but a neighbor is wide ranging from your next house up to those who interact with you in religious, social, and economical aspect. So your neighbor goes beyond your kebele limit even.

One day when we are working in mahiber/ debo he offended me by “Ye-afi ilifiti”, insult. At that time I became very upset, thought to leave out from the mahiber and tried to hit him. “Ersum lemematat tegelele”, as the same time he also tried to hit me. In this process those who are working with us has mediate us, gelagelun. Following that day we were been arranging and finding each other in order to hit each other. In such a situation some days are passed.

Participant5 already decided to forgive before the shimagles facilitated the reconciliation process. I did not express my forgiveness to the offender until the shimagles deal our issue. The shimagles has told the wrongdoer you are wrong and you should compensate; and then he also expressed his remorse, and accepted and did what the shimagles said. Then after the offended forgave the offender in front of the shimagles and they bless each other. In another day they met each other and discussed the issue and blame each other as well as strengthen their forgiveness. Forgiveness means, for Participant5, to forgive others for God's sake that is leaving the wrong inflicted on me for God and forgiving the offender as God does not like revenge and resentment, that is letting go of revenge and resentment towards the offender from this time onwards and developing positive relationships.

Though I became very upset at the moment, latter I thought it was not good to respond in a way that I tried to hit the offender. Accordingly it was possible to forgive the offender who harmed me. You know we have been finding each other for several days to hit one another; but it was difficult and also I found it more harmful than the previous hurt because of the following reasons. Firstly I spent several times thinking of how to revenge the offender; even I had stopped to work for five –six days. Second the previous injury is directly on me; but when I think it again and again the revenges that I want to do will

have an impact on my family as well as the offender's family who have no any idea in the harm inflicted on me. Third, forgiveness is not costly and it is in my hand; you can get nothing from revenge except temporary happiness which results in regret and sadness throughout life.

We are Christian when God created us....In the age of 20-40 humans have to thank God with clean heart. If humans spent this age range not harming others, killing others, insulting others, and without fornication etc., it will be hopeful both in earth and sky; will get in to heaven. Thus this age range is the time when we have to do better things in earth which results in best living in the rest of our life time as well as after life. Thus I believe in this religious fact and it has influenced me a lot to forgive.

After the incident I started to think again and again about my revenge and its consequences. Bimetawus; bimots; bisededis, bitaseres, the offender may die if I hit him, and as a result I may be forced to displace or to be sentenced life-time imprisonment. While I was thinking of revenge I was thinking of the processes conducted by police on me to bring me before the court and to implement the court's decision and thrown in to jail; thus I do not want to see these consequences in my life. And In contrary while I am trying to revenge him he may hit me and I may die. Consequently the fate of my family is to disintegrate. So tidare, thinking of my living and family, and azuro mayet, looking things differently have facilitated my forgiveness. And also I need respect first as a human and second as a priest. And also I recognized that the offender has stopped by his side to arrange a place to hit me and started to regret.

Conflict with a neighbor is harmful; bedelum bichoh ayiwetam, it does not come to you at times of shouting for help; it does not help at times of sickness; it does not share food with you etc. My forgiveness to my neighbor has ended these disadvantages. I eat foods and drink water with my neighbor, we help each other, we together resolve any problem faced us; we share any hardship p as well as happiness. I asleep with peace; it does not matter even if I leave the door open.

### **Individual textural-structural descriptions of participant6's experiences of forgiveness**

It is difficult to list all the details of the harm that inflicted on me. But rather it is better to tell you the process of the conflict that lasts around 40 years. I and my offender were good neighbors and have spent unforgettable good and bad times together. However one day disagreement was happened due to boundary and gradually it escalated and extended to our families. In this process we invited to be hit

each other up to the level where I have used a medium axe to hit him and my neighbor has went to his house and came with a weapon to kill me. Even though the different shimagles (“council members” (Levine, 2008)) at different times had reconciled us more than four times the reconciliation did not last more than 20-30 days each. We breached the reconciliation because our forgiveness was not heartfelt; none of us has seen our mistakes even for a single episode; we only consider our righteousness. Generally I spend around 40 years in conflict with my neighbor; it was ye ayitina dimet nuro, cat and rat like living. It was a living full of suspicion. Unless we forgive lasting reconciliation is impossible.

I have been spent almost half of my life in serious upset, anger and hatred. To relieve this upset, anger and hatred I have been used my force: I tried to hit him, insulted and threaten him and his family as well as his extended relatives; I thought to kill him, I have used my potential (e.g. strongly worded criticism in public place like church,) to prevent him and his family not to get any responsibility in the Kebele where I lived. I withdrew from the Mahiber, Idir and Senbete where even his extended relatives are a member. Even what makes now me ashamed is my action that I hit the herds of my offender. I had thought so dreadful things against the offender.

When I thought the case inside my heart I decided to forgive and not to create any problem from this time onwards. I convince myself not to dispute with the offender but rather to discuss the issue with him and his family if I perceive he wronged me again. Then I told to his sons and other shimagles that I need to reconcile with my offender, so that they can initiate a reconciliation ceremony. Then we sit down and discuss the issue before the shimagle and by apologizing him of my past misdeeds I have forgiven him in front of the shimagles and his sons without any precondition. “forgiveness is, ይቅርታ ማለት ለዓመጋት አርግዝው ከኖርሁት ቂጥኖ በቀል ጋር ለመገናኛ ሌላ አዲስ ቂጥኖ በቀል ላለመጥዝ ለራስና ለእግዚአብሔር ቃል መግባትና ይህንም ከሽመግሌዎችና ከበደሉኝ ሰው ፊት የሚጋገጥ ውሳኔና ሐዩት ነው፣ a decision and process to set free myself from the resentment and revenge that I have pregnant of for many years and not to hold a new dislikes and vowing it to myself and to God and confirming it before the transgressor and council of members. I had spent around 40 years in conflict with my neighbor due to my inability to forgive; I think this is key implication for the difficulty to forgive especially at youthhood and adulthood time.

I never want to transfer such painful living with a neighbor to my children. And as an elder I have to mediate others who are in conflict; so to make my mediation acceptable and fruitful by others I have to forgive first. When I become older and weak I started to think of my God. I started to think of the fate of

my soul after death. Thus to make my eternal living best I have to do better things (e.g. to forgive) in this earth. Even though I have spent my youthhood and adulthood time by not forgiving my neighbor, now is the time to forgive regardless of the past. Besides to religious leaders my life experience has taught me the harmfulness of living with revenge and resentment.

When I live with grudges around 40 years I have got nothing benefit instead it has been full of disadvantage; it is hurting oneself. The resources, time and energy that I spent when I thought to revenge the offender were huge. In thinking to revenge my offender I hurt the offender's herds, crops, children and relatives who have no any intention on the harm inflicted on me; and this is the miserable side of revenge on those who have no any connection to the transgression. We have been in unnecessary suspicion of each other when whatever wrong has been occurred in our herds or property and complaint each other openly before prayers at church. Our revenge has a wave like effect on our extended family. I found the long term consequence of my revenge is on my children. I withdrew from the Mahiber, Idir and Senbete where even his extended relatives are a member. I have been in difficulty to fetch water as the offender closed the road (private) near his house. When I live with grudges around 40 years I have got no benefit instead it has been full of disadvantage.

I think my age and experience has enabled me to develop a quality to forgive. Even though I have spent my youthhood and adulthood time not to forgive my neighbor, I became aware to forgive in this old age. In fact when I was youth and adult I believe everything can be done through force. However in this old age when my hand holds earth I have understood I have been in a wrong view of doing everything by force.

I have lived for many years being pregnant of revenge and resentment. Now I become free from such grudges that I hold of around 40 years. I become free from any unnecessary suspicion; I relieved from my suspicion of the offender. I eat foods and drink water with my neighbor and as a result I fell happy; I share any hardship p and happiness with my neighbor. My families are playing with my neighbor's family peacefully and they help each other whatever thing with trust. Sometimes we discuss some issues for the future. To be honest I feel as a full person.

Maturity of self in relation to time, bodily weakness in time, sense of isolation from others and God while near to death, regretting about the past reactions with the offender as well as his relations with others and his children as an elderly who has a responsibility to mediate others caused him to forgive.

### **Individual textural-structural descriptions of participant7's experiences of forgiveness**

I have lived more than 8 years in love with my sister-in-law; we have been living sisterly and brotherly eating foods and drinking water together. While we have been living in agreement I heard information that my husband's sister defamed me of adultery and gossiping it to individuals whom she met; but she did not tell me such embarrassing, unpleasant issue. As soon as I heard this information I felt ashamed and angry and I attempted to hit her without refining whether she gossiping or not. Following this I ordered my children not to go there even not to play with her children. I stopped all the relations with her. I had said I never forgive her as my good name has once damaged. And even there was a time I decided and asked my husband to divorce.

However the shimagles has told me the benefits of forgiving and advised me to forgive the offender. Following this I was thinking things in different dimension: beten, tidaren ena lijochen, my living and children and I accepted what the shimagles said and started to refrain from any thought and action against the offender. Then though the perpetrator did not admit the wrongs, I have forgiven the wrongdoer before the shimagles after I told her openly what she wronged me by saying አንቺ ብትክጅም እኔ ግን ነገሩን ትቸዋለሁ እናም ይቅር ብዮሻለሁ, though you deny the wrong I leave go of the issue and forgive you. Forgiveness is agreement with the offender; it is the returning back of my mind to its normal state like the pre transgression period. It has respect and love. Forgiveness is getting suitable place by God. In fact at the beginning it was very difficult for me to forgive. I have refused and returned the shimagles 2 times when they tried to help me to forgive and to reconcile with the offender. Even now I feel something unpleasant when the issue come in to my mind rarely.

I forgave her as I like my children, house and my living. My unforgiveness may lead me to divorce and as a result my children may be hurt and disintegrated. If I would not forgive I thought it would harm me as long as I live in this earth and after death.

My belief in God enabled me to forgive her by resisting whatever unpleasant name given to me. On my side I have forgiven her for God's sake. I prayed to God by saying my Lord please forgive me; please help me as you know all the things. If I would not forgive I thought it would harm me as long as I live in this earth and after death. Forgiving has a benefit both on earth and sky. If I am not forgiven others, God will not forgive me.



Forgiveness resulted in happiness and peace as well as returned relations. The forgiver and the forgiven help each other. “I feel happiness, caring my children and living with my husband in peace. I eat foods and drink water with my offender by leaving what happened in the past, we live in peace, the others stopped from gossiping. I have got care from my sister-in-law when I gave birth as well as my children’s are getting care too from her; we help each other in any social life such as mahiber, Ekub, Idir and any party”.

### **Individual textural-structural descriptions of participant8’s experiences of forgiveness**

Without any wrong I was fired of from my work by the ruling party at the time: they ordered me to leave the university within 24 hours. Since then they were preventing me not to work in another organization (such as embassy, NGO, ECA etc.) until I have returned to my work in 2018. They were following me where ever I go and have taken all my property. After this I went to countryside and start to farm. I have had no any response during and following the atrocity because there was no time, right and opportunity at that time.

Following a discontinued of 25 years harm and having return to work, participant8 has openly discussed the complaint and assured the forgiveness officially (through media) repeatedly. “I did not forgive within the 25 years of continued atrocity inflicted on me; in these years I used my potential and time to prevent further harm on me as much as possible. Following the discontinuity of such atrocity I officially (through media) have forgiven those who harmed me whether they are alive or not. I forgave them again and again.” Not charging the offenders is one of the activities participant8 assured hie forgiveness “If I had charged the offenders, I would have revenged them and have not got moral intelligence”.

ይቅር ማለት የተበደልሁትን በደል ማውጣት በዳዮች ከባለፈው ስህተታቸው ተግዲው ይህን እንዳይደግሙ ማዘውቅ ነው። Forgiveness means to let go of the wrong did on me by the offender and announcing it to the offender to enable them to learn from their past mistakes and not to do it again. “I need to greet my offenders; but they feel ashamed and far away from me when they see me. I do not need the offenders to face suffering.

I forgave for my own benefit, for the sake of others (the next generation and the offenders). I need my health. As the hurt has continued for 25 years it is not forgettable and it would not have given me peace if I had needed to forget it consciously. Thus the best choice is to surpass the atrocity done on me. And the only way to surpass any harm is forgiveness; forgiving your offenders. If I had not able to forgiven

the offenders who inflicted a satanic action on me, I would have ruminated this negative thing again and again and there by my health would have endangered. And I need time to thank those (my families, close friends and God) who helped me to get this glorious opportunity (the opportunity to return back to my work). Thus I do not want to take time to entertain negative ideas and to revenge those who did atrocity on me. I need the next generation to learn from us by observing; you cannot teach by revenge; but forgiveness can teach. Children can learn from forgiveness. Forgiveness can help children to use their full potential to serve their own and their country. First of all it can help them to free themselves from revenge. The gain from forgiving is greater than the gain from revenge. Revenge does not need that much effort; doing what you need is just enough. Other animals like dog, hyena, lion, fox etc. can revenge; but they cannot forgive. Thus as a human I have to forgive. And lastly, Punishments never teach those people who had inflicted atrocity on me. Reasonable actions (e.g. an eye for an eye) even never correct them from their wrongdoings. The better thing is to forgive them; thereby they can see and understand that the act they have done was wrong. So my forgiving to the offenders will give them time and chance to thoroughly investigate their mistakes. I did not expect any apology from the offenders.

I feel freedom and happiness. I am sleeping well. I have got moral intelligence; if I had charged the offenders, I would have revenged them and have not got moral intelligence. Forgiveness has power. I have got great feedbacks from my forgiveness: people told me they have learnt from my forgiveness. And hearing this is very enjoyable.

The returning back to work after 25 years, the need for time to thanks families, friends and God who helped him at the time of hurt and to return back to work, relations with the next generation, personal health concerns, the cause of the 25 years continued atrocity on him and his property (e.g. restriction in space and lose of his property), and the intention that the offenders will get satanic satisfaction and will not learn If he tried to revenge underlay the participants forgiveness experience

## **Declaration**

Here I declared that this thesis entitled “exploring individual’s lived experience of forgiveness in Ethiopia and its implication for community peacebuilding” is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University, and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

### **Declared by:**

Name: Dagnaw Kebede Terefe

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### **Approved by:**

This thesis has been submitted for the examination with my approval as Advisor.

Name of the Advisor: Yonas Adaye (Ph.D.)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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