



**The Challenges Faced by Ethiopian Migrant Returnees From Europe in the Reintegration
Process and Coping Mechanisms to Those Challenges**

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis entitled “The Challenges Faced by Ethiopian Migrant Returnees From Europe in the Reintegration Process and Coping Mechanisms to those Challenges” is my original work. This thesis has not been presented for any other university and is not at the same time submitted in compliance with any other degree.

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List of Acronyms/Abbreviations

ARRA – Agency for Refugees and Returnees Authority

AVRR-Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

CSA -Central Statistics Agency

EUR- Euro

IDPs-Internally Displaced Persons

IGAD -Intergovernmental Authority for Development

IOM- International Organization for Migration

KII-Key Informant Interview

LP-laissez-passer

KSA -Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

MoLSA- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

NOK-Norwegian Kroner

OPF -Overseas Pakistan Fund

PhD-Doctor of Philosophy

RRS- Refugees and Returnees Service

SEK-Swedish Kroner

USA -United States of America

UN-United Nations

UNHCR-United Nations High Commission for Refugees

USD-American Dollar

VHR-Voluntary Humanitarian Return

WWII- Second World War

Table of Contents

Contents	Pages
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Research Questions.....	5
1.4 Objectives	5
<i>1.4.1 Specific Objectives</i>	5
1.6 Limitations of the Study.....	6
2. Literature Review.....	7
2.1 The Global Migration Trend.....	7
2.2 Migration Trends in Ethiopia.....	9
<i>2.3.1 The Push-Pull Theory of Migration</i>	9
<i>2.3.2 The New Economic /Household Theory</i>	10
<i>2.3.3 The Neoclassical Theory</i>	10
<i>2.3.4 The Structural Theory of Migration</i>	11
<i>2.3.5 Social Network Theory</i>	11
2.4. Return and Reintegration	12
<i>2.4.1 Return definition</i>	12
<i>2.4.2 The Nature of Migrant Returnees</i>	13
<i>2.4. 4 The Concept of Reintegration</i>	14
2.5 Global Responses to Returnees.....	16
2.7 Policies and Laws Related to Ethiopian Returnees.....	18
3. Methods	21
3.1. Research Design.....	21
3. 2. Sample and Sampling Techniques	21

3.3 Data Collection Methods	23
3.4 Data Analysis	24
3.5 Ethical Considerations	25
4. Results	25
4.1 Results	25
4.3 Challenges of Returnees During the Reintegration Process	29
4.3.1 <i>Economic</i>	30
4.3.2 <i>Social</i>	31
4.3.4 <i>Psychological</i>	35
5. Discussion.....	38
6. Conclusion and Recommendations.....	40
6.1 Conclusion	40
6.2 Recommendations.....	41
6.3 Implication.....	42
7. Reference	43
Appendix 1 (Interview Guide for returnees from Europe)	47
Appendix 2(Interview guide for KII)	50
Appendix 3(Consent form).....	52

Abstract

Migration has become a significant phenomenon in the contemporary world, with millions of individuals migrating to seek better economic opportunities and flee violent conflicts in their home countries. However, not all migrants achieve success in their journeys for various reasons, and some eventually decide to return voluntarily to their country of origin. This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by Ethiopian migrant returnees from Europe during the reintegration process. Purposive sampling was used to select eight returnees from Europe who had lived in the host country for 3 years or more, along with three key informants from two organizations (one governmental and one non-governmental) that operate in the area of reintegrating returnees from Europe. A qualitative approach was chosen as the research method for this study, and data were collected using in-depth interviews through a semi-structured interview guide. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The results indicate that migrant returnees from Europe encounter three main challenges: economic, social, and psychological challenges throughout the reintegration process, and highlight some coping mechanisms. This study provides insights into the various dimensions of challenges and emphasizes that significant efforts are required to address those challenges at the individual, structural, and societal levels.

Keywords: returnees, Europe, reintegration, challenges, coping mechanisms

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

People often think of migration as a recent phenomenon. However, migration has been a feature of human existence for centuries. (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). Humans always migrated in groups and as individuals to seek freedom from war and conflict, to escape hunger and poverty, to find new economic opportunities and employment, to flee from religious intolerance or political repression, or to trade and travel. (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). The historian Robin (1995) has identified some distinct migration periods or events over the last four centuries, such as Migration within Europe, the settlement of colonials, slavery, and migration after WWII.

Schewl and Asmamaw (2021) have studied Ethiopia's historical development and migration patterns, and they have identified three key trends in the emerging "mobility transition": the sedentarization of the nomadic and semi-nomadic population, the urbanization of internal migration trajectories, and the diversification of international migration. In addition, this article discussed political conflict, resettlement, and famine that led to significant internal and international displacement and explored the drivers of these mobility shifts, evaluating the relative influence of various political, economic, cultural, and technological developments on migration patterns over time.

Abel (2023) studied the nature and patterns of international migration in Ethiopia. He indicated in his findings that the international migration of Ethiopians has a long history, but it became more significant in the late 20th century, particularly after the overthrow of the

monarchy in 1974. This political change caused many Ethiopians to flee, especially during the late 1970s and 1980s, primarily to neighbouring countries. In recent years, the focus has shifted from people fleeing for safety to those leaving for better economic opportunities, leading to new migration destinations in Africa, such as South Africa and countries in the Middle East.

Fikadu et al. (2020) conducted a study on the trends in contemporary international Migration in Ethiopia. As indicated in their findings, the migration trend in Ethiopia is very complex, and this study examines Ethiopia's migration patterns within the broader context of East Africa, highlighting the complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors during migration. Their findings indicated that Ethiopia is not only a source country but also a destination country. They described a shift from Ethiopia being a major source of refugees to a more balanced role as both a source and destination for migrants.

Fikadu et al. (2020) ,in this study the findings show that there is a significant increase in international migrants from Ethiopia, growing from fewer than 400,000 in 1960 to over 1 million by 2015. Overall, Ethiopia is evolving into a migration hub, with more than 1.2 million migrants residing in Ethiopia, and found mostly the main cause of migration is Economic motivations, which become a push and pull factor to travel to the Middle East and the USA.

Return migration is one component of migration, and the overall return process can be divided into two main categories, voluntary and forced, based on migrants' preparedness and available resources (Ruta et al., 2020). Migrants return to their country of origin for several reasons; the motive behind returning can be a pushing factor from the host country, such as the status in the host country, rejection of their asylum, health issues, and others. Pulling factors in the country of origin also contributed to migrants' decision to return on their own, such as an

improved political and economic situation in the country of origin, family issues, or personal choice. On the other hand, the migrants may return against their will, which is called Forced Return. For instance, the return of Ethiopian migrants from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in November 2013 was a forced one. (Hilawit, 2017).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study was focused on the post-return challenges of returnees from Europe during the reintegration process and the coping mechanisms of returnees who are living in Addis Ababa. Wubshet (2021) studied the challenges Ethiopian migrant returnees encounter in the reintegration processes considering females deported from Saudi Arabia. His findings indicated that Ethiopian migrant returnees, especially women deported from Saudi Arabia, face significant challenges when trying to reintegrate into their home country. These challenges include a weak economy, a lack of job opportunities, and the loss of social networks, which can lead to psychological issues like anxiety and depression.

Nisrane et al. (2017) have studied the reintegration challenges of economic reintegration of returnees from Middle Eastern countries and indicated that economic reintegration, which in its basic form is about securing a livelihood, is a challenge for most returnees. The reason relates to the migration settings, preparedness, and reintegration assistance in the home county. The author have also discussed about reintegration assistance for involuntary returnees is beneficial only for those who manage to obtain some savings out of their migration. The findings imply the need for policy improvements regarding the working conditions of female domestic workers in the host countries and reintegration programs in the home countries.

Arowolo (2000) in his article, indicated that a structured approach should be implemented to successfully re-integrate returnee migrants to their home countries. He emphasizes the need for government agencies to organize support for returnees, as they are no longer considered refugees. The author argues that effective long-term planning and the establishment of a dedicated agency within the National Planning Ministry are crucial for creating a successful reintegration program, which would also encourage support from donors and make the return process smoother for migrants

Many researchers have studied the causes, patterns, trends, and consequences of migration in Ethiopia, Emebet (2002); Adamnesh (2006); Adamnesh et.al (2014); and Melese (2014). Furthermore, other researchers have conducted research focusing on Ethiopian return migration and reintegration challenges from different perspectives. Among them, the challenges of migrant returnees from the Middle East, challenges faced by female migrant returnees, and the Reintegration of Ethiopian migrant returnees in the case of KSA, studied by different researchers (Wubshet, 2021; Betelhem, 2015; Hanna, 2014; Kuschminder, 2013; Hilawit,2017).

Various studies have examined the causes and consequences of migration in Ethiopia, and others also studied the challenges of reintegration with a main emphasis on returnees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia due to the mass deportation of citizens from KSA since 2023/24. However, there is a notable gap in research focused on the reintegration challenges of returnees from European countries. This research aims to fill this gap by assessing the reintegration challenges experienced by Ethiopian migrant returnees from Europe and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of their unique experiences and needs.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is intended to assess challenges of returnees from Europe in the reintegration process and their coping Mechanisms who live in Addis Ababa. Therefore, the study also addressed the following specific research questions.

- What kind of economic, social, and psychosocial challenges did Ethiopian returnees from Europe face after they returned
- What coping mechanisms are commonly used by Ethiopian returnees from Europe to cope with those challenges
- Assess the available support for Ethiopian returnees from Europe by government agencies and non-governmental organizations as a reintegration

1.4 Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to explore the challenges of Ethiopian returnee migrants from Europe during their reintegration process, and to identify the coping mechanisms the return migrants used to overcome those challenges.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

- Identify the challenges (economic, social, and psychological) of the reintegration of migrant returnees from Europe
- Explore the coping mechanisms returnees used for those challenges
- Assess the institutional support system for migrant returnees from Europe

1.5 Study Area

The study delimited the research on identifying the challenges of returnees from Europe during the reintegration process in Addis Ababa town. The researcher chose returnees who have returned since 2022 and who are living in Addis Ababa, considering the time and accessibility. In addition, data was collected from two institutions that provide reintegration support for returnees from Europe through KII to include their perspective. Both organizations operate in Addis Ababa.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

While undertaking this study, the researcher encountered some limitations. Most notably, the small number of participants due to unwillingness of other returnees to capture more experiences. However, the use of semi-structured interviews proved very useful in gaining in-depth and meaningful data from the participants. While the method of interviewing is a time-consuming process, it proved to be an extremely efficient means of extracting information from individuals openly and honestly and thus allowed the researcher to gain invaluable insight into the personal experience of being a returnee and its challenges of reintegrating back. Another limitation relates to researcher bias, which is always a risk in any type of research study. This researcher tried to be aware of and be vigilant of researcher bias. Although it is impossible to eliminate research bias, the researcher is confident that the results are trustworthy.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature Review

This section briefly reviews the available literature related to the research topic. It will examine and present different theories in relation to migration, define and discuss in detail related concepts such as return migration and reintegration

2.1 The Global Migration Trend

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has released the World Migration Report 2024 which shows the important changes in the global migration trend. The report discloses the misinformation about migration. In this report, IOM states that currently, there is a global shift in migration due to increased displaced people and increased remittances. The report focuses mainly on the positive contribution of migration to development, both host and the country of origin. Reportedly, the global remittances increased from 2020 to 2022 by 650% . (IOM ,2024).

The IOM report, 2024 acknowledges migration is an intrinsic part of human history and discloses that most migration happens within the region and most migration is regular and safe. However, misinformation and the politicization of migration portray migration as a threat to developed countries, which is far from the reality.

Of that 831 billion in remittances,647 billion were sent by migrants to low- and middle-income countries. These remittances can constitute a significant portion of those countries ' GDPs, and globally, these remittances now surpass foreign direct investment in those countries. The report reveals that while international migration continues to drive human development, challenges persist. With an estimated 281 million international

migrants worldwide, 117 million are the number of displaced individuals due to conflict, violence, disaster, and other reasons.”(IOM, 2024).

2.2 Migration Trends in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a source, transit, and destination of migrants. Ethiopia can be considered a migration hub since many internal and international migrations happen in Ethiopia. The National Labour Force Assessment in Ethiopia shows that the dominant migration in Ethiopia is internal migration, which is from rural to urban. This happened due to different push and pull factors. Push factors in rural areas include poverty, overpopulation, famine, and scarce land for farming. The pull factors in urban areas include employment opportunities, accessibility of some services, and others can be mentioned. The study mentioned that some rural-urban migrants use internal migration as a stepping stone and then eventually migrate internationally for better opportunities.(Tadele et al.,2006).

The international migration in Ethiopia mainly happened after the 1974 revolution. During that time, people migrated to escape from political persecution (Red Terror), and their intended destination was the Western world. However, currently, this trend has shifted, and many Ethiopian migrants migrate to the Gulf states and the Middle East to get better opportunities (Tadele et al.,2006). The other report, jointly released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Central Statistics Agency (CSA) in 2021, called the “Labor Force and Migration Survey Report,” provides up-to-date statistics on the labour force and Ethiopian internal and international migration. Accordingly, the survey revealed.

“An estimated 839,000 Ethiopians migrated abroad in the past five years, with 78% aged between 15 and 29 years. Close to 31% of these migrants travelled to the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia, while South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and Yemen were popular destinations”. (IOM, 2024).

As movement from Ethiopia to the Gulf countries is largely irregular, Ethiopian migrants often experience great perils and are and are exposed to a wide range of risks on these migration journeys. The survey found that close to 51,000 migrants are missing, a majority of whom are men (85%), with many more believed to have perished or gone missing on the way to their destination country using dangerous land and sea routes”. (IOM,2024).

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Migration

Various theoretical models have been applied by different scholars to analyze migration issues. Among others, the following theories are significant: The push-pull, Neo-classical, New economic (Household), Structural, and Social Network Theory. We will examine each theory briefly.

2.3.1 The Push-Pull Theory of Migration

This is one of the classical theories. This theory emphasizes that people migrate due to two factors: those factors are the driving factors that push people to migrate and the pull factors that attract migrants to the host country.

This Theory perceives that the causes of migration lie in the combination of ‘push factors’ driving people to leave their areas of origin, and ‘pull factors’ attracting them to certain receiving countries. Push-pull models usually identify various economic, environmental, and demographic factors, which are assumed to push migrants out of places of origin and lure them into destination places (Bisrat, 2006).

2.3.2 The New Economic /Household Theory

As its name indicates, this theory relates that the decision to migrate is not taken at the individual level alone but rather at the household level or with the family. “The decision for migration is considered not only by the interest of the individual migrant alone but also by the collective verdict of the family” (Mohammad, 2013:187). In this theory, the individual is not independent in deciding their migration; rather, families sometimes decide, including extended families. (King: 2002). This is very common in the Ethiopian context, especially in rural areas. Mostly, families facilitate and finance the migration by selling their properties, which could be cows, land, or any other property. The family believes that they will benefit from migration through remittances.

Bisrat (2006), in his study, finds out that, in Ethiopia, many migration decisions are made by families, especially for those who are from the rural parts, where families benefit from the remittance to protect the family or household in times of loss of income.

2.3.3 The Neoclassical Theory

This theory relates that most international migration happens due to economic differences between developing and developed countries, such as labour supply and wage differentials, which are some of the factors considered by migrants.

“The Neo-Classical Theory with its basic assumption that Migration is triggered primarily by economic comparisons of relative benefits and costs, including financial and Psychological (De Haas,2010).

2.3.4 The Structural Theory of Migration

The structural Theory considers migration as one form of economic /labour exploitation conducted by developed countries on less developed countries through employing migrants with lower wages, and unfavourable conditions in their industries. This means developed countries search for cheap labour in underdeveloped nations. “This theory explains migration-related issues by emphasizing the element of economic exploitation of the less developed countries by the developed ones. Workers from developing countries are attracted to industrial labour markets characterized by low wages, unfavourable conditions, and a lack of job security, exposing themselves to all types of exploitation”. (De Hass,2020).

2.3.5 Social Network Theory

This theory associates migration with the emergence of migration cultures. Mainly presence of social networks or ties in the destination country will make migration easier. Since it reduced uncertainty. In addition, the migrants have enough information about the destination country. (Mohammed,2013). This is common in Ethiopia; one example could be in the southern region of Ethiopia, where many people migrate to South Africa since they have relatives/peers in South Africa and have information about the destination country. Mostly relatives in the destination country facilitate and support the process.

“This theory assumes that the presence of a network in the country of destination is important in providing information, minimizing uncertainty, reducing transaction costs, and decreasing the relative importance of traditional economic and social barriers to migration (King: 2002)”.

According to Massey et al (1993), the social network theory is summarized as follows: “migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-immigrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin. They increase the likelihood of international movement because they lower the costs and risks of movement and increase the expected net returns to migration. Network connections constitute a form of social capital that people can draw upon to gain access to foreign employment.”

2.4. Return and Reintegration

2.4.1 Return Definition

Even though there is no universally agreed-upon definition for “Return”, IOM defined it in its glossary as Return is

The act or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure. This could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in the case of returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) and demobilized combatants; or between a country of destination or transit and a country of origin, as in the case of Migrant workers, refugees or asylum seekers” (IOM, 2019),

The most often cited “Return Migration” belongs to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). According to IOM (2019, 186) ‘Return Migration’ refers to ‘the movement of persons returning to their country of origin after having moved away from their place of habitual residence and crossed an international border’. This comprehensive definition needs to be unpacked. The process of returning is determined by various situations and should be understood as such. Hence, different types of return migration have been identified.

2.4.2 The Types of Migrant Returnees

The nature of migrant returnees can be categorized into two main types, voluntary and Forced return. Two main types of return migration are defined as follows:

Voluntary return is “the assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit or another country based on the voluntary decision of the returnee” (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).

We can consider the return as a voluntary return when the decision to return is taken by the migrant without any physical or psychological pressure involved.

The Voluntary returns can be further classified into spontaneous or assisted:

Spontaneous return is “the voluntary, independent return of a migrant or a group of migrants to their country of origin, usually without the support of States or other international or national assistance” (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) is the "administrative, logistical or financial support, including reintegration assistance, to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country or country of transit and who decide to return to their country of origin" (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).

Voluntary humanitarian return (VHR) is the application of assisted voluntary return and reintegration principles in humanitarian settings and “often represents a life-saving measure for migrants who are stranded or in detention” (IOM, 2023).

IOM distinguishes between “voluntary return” and “voluntary repatriation”. Hence, the latter indicates the “return to the country of origin based on the refugees’ free and informed decision (IOM, 2019, 229). This could be undertaken in a coordinated form or spontaneously. here in the earlier case, UNHCR and states are engaged in the process, while in the latter, they may have limited involvement.

Forced Return/Involuntary Return

The second type of return migration is “Involuntary/Forced Return”. It is “The act of returning an individual, against his or her will, to the country of origin, transit, or to a third country that agrees to receive the person, generally carried out based on an administrative or judicial act or decision” (IOM, 2019, 77). Forced return migrants are those who have been deported or exiled by host country authorities (Chobanyan 2013/03, 1).

2.4. 4 The Concept of Reintegration

Migrant returnees often undergo several life experiences. Upon return, they have to reestablish their normal life in their country of origin. Reintegration processes are key to assisting them in this regard. According to a definition by the (UNHCR, 2004), reintegration is "the achievement of a sustainable return, i.e., the ability of returnees to secure the political, economic, and social conditions to maintain their life, livelihood, and dignity".

A recent definition by IOM considers reintegration as a “process” that enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social, and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood, dignity, and inclusion in civic life. Therefore, reintegration is a process that demands coordinated and harmonized interventions, primarily intended with the objective of

reestablishing and helping people who have experienced migration to a normal and safe life. (IOM, 2009)

Migrant returnees encounter significant challenges when rebuilding their lives in their home countries after return, making the reintegration process essential for their success. Reintegration involves assisting returnees in achieving economic stability, accessing social services, and reconnecting with their communities, enabling them to live with dignity. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) highlights that effective reintegration necessitates coordinated support at individual, community, and structural levels, addressing economic, social, and psychosocial needs.

“The notions of return and reintegration are intimately interlinked with sustainability. IOM defines sustainable reintegration as follows: This definition is based on trends identified in existing literature, on IOM’s practice, and a review of complementary approaches outside the traditional scope of AVRR. It recognizes that returnees need to participate fully in their return communities' economic and social life and that developing a sense of psychosocial well-being after return is crucial to their sustainable reintegration. Consequently, the sustainability of reintegration is not only dependent on the returning individual but also on the local community and the structural situation of the environment of return. IOM’s integrated approach addresses three dimensions of reintegration

The Economic dimension covers aspects of reintegration that contribute to re-entering the economic life and sustained livelihoods. This includes starting small businesses, education, and job placement.

The Social dimension addresses returning migrants' access to public services and infrastructure in their countries of origin, including access to health, education, housing, justice, and social protection schemes

The Psychosocial dimension encompasses the reinsertion of returning migrants into personal support networks (friends, relatives, neighbors) and civil society structures (associations, self-help groups, other organizations, and civic life generally). This also includes re-engagement with the values, ways of living, language, moral principles, and traditions of the country of origin's society. (IOM ,2019)

2.5 Global Responses to Returnees

Reintegration support is one of the indispensable parts of migration management that needs due attention. This step is critical because this is the stage where the returnee migrants re-integrate/are reincluded in the society's socio-economic and political life. However, many forced returnees globally struggle with economic reintegration due to a lack of financial resources. In contrast to Voluntary returnees, who have time to prepare and make informed decisions about their return, forced returnees encounter greater challenges. Both groups face social reintegration difficulties, largely due to weekend social networks resulting from prolonged separation from family and community members. Globally, it is believed that reintegration support should be tailor-made to address the individual needs of migrant returnees. (Kleist et al,2013). In this regard, different Asian countries have initiated and tried reintegration programmes that address problems faced by returnees in their home country (Torna,20203).

Torna has examined different Asian countries' experiences with reintegration and found that the Philippines has a good experience. In the Philippines, many laws and policies support

migrant returnees, such as there is one center called the Filipino Workers Resource Center. The centre provides orientation for returning workers. Upon return, the government addresses the economic and social concerns of migrants using livelihood and local employment.

The Philippine government has a livelihood development program that supports returnees' projects with finance, technical assistance in project planning, and training for those interested in starting income-generating activities. Short training is also provided to returnees on different topics, such as small business development, specific skills, and industry-specific mentoring are also provided. In addition, technical education and skills training are provided in hotel and restaurant operations and caregiving. Furthermore, banks and microfinance provided a special package for returnees (Torna, 2013).

In Sri Lanka, housing and industrial initiatives were launched for returnees. Similarly, in Pakistan, the Overseas Pakistan Fund (OPF) was established to support returnees in starting small and micro businesses. (Islam, 2010). Though there are a few good practices in the world still there are still challenges in implementing reintegration programmes. The challenges range from poor coordination to a lack of resources.

2.6 The History of Returnees in Ethiopia

Although the exact figures are not known, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates that around two million Ethiopian migrants are living abroad. Creating decent employment opportunities remains a challenge for the country, with up to 3 million young Ethiopians entering the labour market every year. In November 2013, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) decided to expel undocumented migrants as part of the “Saudization” of the KSA labour market aimed at creating job opportunities for young unemployed Saudis and the regularization of the labour market. Between November 2013 and March 2014, more than

163,018 Ethiopian migrants were forcibly repatriated (IOM report, 2014). Given the sudden and unprepared nature of this forced repatriation, and with little or no fallback position, the seamless reintegration of these returnees has been painfully slow and largely unaddressed. The Government of Ethiopia, together with other humanitarian actors, successfully managed the return, but the reintegration process remains a challenge in the country. ILO(2017), Support to the reintegration of returnees in Ethiopia. <https://www.itcilo.org/projects/support-reintegration-returnees-ethiopia>

Ethiopian migrants mainly return from the Middle East or destination and transit countries on the African continent and, to a lesser extent, from Europe and the Americas (IOM, 2019). Ethiopia is one of the top countries when it comes to the number of beneficiaries of the IOM Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programme. Many return migrants are vulnerable after experiencing abuse and other traumas during their migration journeys or in their countries of destination. This is particularly true for stranded migrants returning from transit countries such as Libya and Yemen, where they have often been held in detention before return. As a result, many return to Ethiopia in poor mental and physical health without savings or assets to support their livelihood.

2.7 Policies and Laws Related to Ethiopian Returnees

Ethiopia lacks a comprehensive labour migration policy and a national strategy and policy regarding the socio-economic reintegration of returned migrants, which requires a well-designed and integrated intervention of coordinated efforts by all stakeholders. There are, however, various legal frameworks that indirectly respond to the socio-economic reintegration of returnees in Ethiopia. The Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 923/2016 identifies MoLSA as the lead Ministry to facilitate the reintegration of returnees and stipulates that a directive shall

specify the details. At the same time, the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation No. 909/2015, established a subcommittee under the National Task Force on human trafficking and Smuggling that deals with reintegration.

Furthermore, in 2018, a reintegration Directive was issued to guide the work on return and reintegration in Ethiopia. The Directive outlines the support mechanism offered, including rehabilitation, social services and economic support. The national lead agency in charge of return and reintegration is currently the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency (under the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction), which is also leading the work on nationals returning from outside the EU and the Americas (IOM, 2019). However, many government and non-government actors are involved in different ways in return and reintegration assistance in Ethiopia. For example, the Agency for Refugee and Return Affairs (ARRA) is receiving funding from the EUTF to run a programme that offers assistance to returning migrants from EU Member States and provides support to strengthen government structures and institutions related to return and reintegration. MoLSA is in charge of data collection and registration related to return and reintegration. Although Ethiopia has a long history of hosting refugees, administering refugee operations through a well-established government organization or lead agency did not exceed 40 years. A department dubbed “Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs” under the Ministry of Interior and later under the National Intelligence and Security Service was the first organization established by the government to lead and manage refugee and related operations in the country.

The organization was then renamed as “Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs” based on Proclamation No. 1097/2011 under the Ministry of Peace. Still, though, the Agency changed

its nomenclature to “Refugees and Returnees Service” based on Proclamation No. 1263/2014 under the National Security and Intelligence Services.

Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) is a governmental institution that runs its activities financed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Service also closely works with other UN agencies, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), and national and international organizations. In General, there is not much focus on returnees, but there are non-governmental organizations that work on return and reintegration, but not been significantly addressed. (Andersson,2022)

CHAPTER THREE

3. Methods

This chapter sets out the methodological approach undertaken to discover the challenges of returnees from Europe during the reintegration process from different perspectives: economic, social, and psychological. It presents the sample that was selected, and the method used for data collection, along with the process of data analysis. Finally, it discusses ethical considerations.

3.1. Research Design

The study design for this research was a descriptive qualitative study design. The researcher feels that qualitative tools are significant instruments for apprehending reintegration experiences, and it was considered more relevant as it allowed greater capacity to gain more depth and meaning based on individual experiences. For the research, migrant returnees were selected to share their experiences and challenges of reintegration. Besides, stakeholders engaged in reintegration efforts of migrant returnees from Europe were contacted to share their achievements and pitfalls. The researcher conducted an in-depth interview using semi-structured interview guide. The interview was flexible in the sense that the respondents should be allowed to raise issues and questions that they think are important.

3. 2. Sample and Sampling Techniques

In choosing the sample of study participants, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique. ‘This form of sampling is essentially strategic and necessitates an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling (Bryman,2024)’. The inclusion criteria were based on returnees who returned from Europe in 2022 and who reside in Addis Ababa, and those returnees who voluntarily return to their countries. Participants' biodata was

obtained from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Initially, 10 participants were contacted to be interviewed; however, two withdrew from taking part due to personal reasons. As indicated, the participants' educational background ranges from 12th complete to PHD, and the years of stay abroad range from 3 years to 18 years. This diversified background of the participants gives different feelings and perspectives on the research topic. Data collection was terminated at the point of saturation, where the researcher was not able to get new information by adding more respondents. The researcher has given a pseudonym for each participant for confidentiality purposes. Table 1: Profile of study participants

Name	Age	Sex	Marital status	Family size	Educational level	Return Yr	Country of return	Years of stay abroad
Gedamu	38	Male	single	1	Diploma	2023	Germany	11years
Abiyot	46	Male	Married	2	Diploma	2023	Sweden	18 years
Mered	37	Male	Married	5	Degree	2023	Switzerland	3 years
Hiwot	45	Female	Single	1	12 th	2023	Norway	16 years
Girmay	48	Male	Single	1	PHD	2023	Germany	18 years
Geda	38	Female	Divorce	2	12 th	2023	Sweden	4&8/12 Years
Bekele	34	Male	Married	3	Diploma	2024	Germany	3 years
Abrham	40	Male	Single	1	12 th	2022	Malta	11 years

As key informants, the researcher has chosen three experts from governmental and nongovernmental institutions that are working on the reintegration of returnees from Europe. In line with this, the researcher interviewed a total of three reintegration officers as key informants (two from IOM and one from RRS).

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The data collection took place in 2025. Since the participants were not given consent to be recorded, the researcher transcribed their responses by taking notes during the interview. Initially, all participants were contacted by phone, and the researcher explained the details of the research and booked appointments to interview in person. All participants chose to have an interview carried out in their convenient place where they felt more comfortable and spoke without any fear.

In-depth interview

The researcher used a Semi-structured interview guide for in-depth interviews and was able to ask different probing questions to get a better insight into the participants' responses concerning the research topic.

Each participant was presented with a similar set of questions relating to their experience of the challenges of reintegration. The questions are open-ended questions except for the bio-data section, such as age, marital status, and educational background, which are closed-ended. The questionnaire is designed to explore the various challenges that returnees encounter during the reintegration process and to identify specific obstacles related to accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment, which are often critical for successful

reintegration. Additionally, the interview guide seeks to understand how returnees cope with these challenges,

Open-ended questions allowed the participant to express their feelings and thoughts broadly. In addition, the researcher took observations during the interview, especially the emotions and tones of the participants. Confidentiality of the data was maintained throughout the study.

Key Informant Interview (KII)

The researcher chose three key informants from two organizations, two experts from IOM and one from RRS (Refugee and Returnee Service), the latter of which is a governmental organization. The key informants were chosen based on their relevance to the research topic. Three of them are reintegration officers and are experienced in providing reintegration specifically for returnees from Europe. After an appointment is booked with the KI, the researcher interviews the KI in their office using the interview guide, and notes are taken by the researcher. The questions with the key informants focused on the services available for returnees from Europe and their effectiveness, as well as the challenges faced during reintegration. Participants also asked for any possible recommendations for improving the reintegration process for Ethiopian migrant returnees. Additionally, the assessment included an exploration of existing policy gaps. These open-ended questions proved valuable in gathering insights from professionals in the field.

3.4 Data Analysis

The researcher used a qualitative approach for data interpretation and analysis. It gives due emphasis to qualitative approaches since the issue raised here needs description and interpretation of meanings rather than numeric expression. The data was collected by taking

notes, and the researcher read the notes frequently during the interview. Once the data is collected, it is then coded, classified according to common attributes then the organized data is analyzed thematically. Then, the organized data is interpreted through already identified themes. The themes are economic, social, and psychological challenges faced by returnees. The final stage involves data verification, this process involves a process of checking the validity of understanding by rechecking the transcripts and codes. The researcher has also included some direct quotes from respondents.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher obtained permission and informed consent from participants regarding their willingness to participate in the interview while also ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process. (see Appendix 3). Furthermore, the researcher assured the respondents that they could withdraw from the interview at any stage of the process and that they had the right to decline to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with. The researcher explained full information to all respondents about the purpose of the study and assured them that there was no risk associated with their participation in this study. In general, the study was applied and governed by all the above ethical principles throughout the whole study process.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Results vs Findings

4.1 Results

This chapter presents the findings from the interview process and subsequent data analysis and discussion. First, a brief profile of each participant is presented. Then, the key

themes that emerged following data analysis are discussed. The data is categorized under various themes, and those themes are economic, social, and psychological challenges.

4.2 Description of Participants

Their name has been changed for confidentiality purposes

□ Gedamu is a male returnee from Germany. Before he migrated to Germany, he was a Chef /Cook at Ethiopian Airlines. He graduated with a diploma in food preparation. He was earning a good income, but at that time, he was a member of an opposition political party called “All Ethiopian Unity Party.” There was pressure from the ruling government party, and he fled to Germany, fearing prosecution. The Ethiopian airline staff have a benefit package to travel once a year to any country, then he used that opportunity to go to Germany. Then he asked for asylum in Germany, but was not accepted. He appealed twice without success. Finally, after 11 years of staying in Germany, he returned voluntarily to Ethiopia in 2023 due to a medical condition (mental illness). He is single.

□ Abiyot is a male returnee from Sweden. Before he migrated to Sweden, he was a college instructor, and he graduated 10+3 Diploma in textiles. He travelled to Sweden using a tourist visa to visit his fiancée, his current wife. Then, he applied for asylum there and got only a protection status, not a residence permit. After he lived there for 18 years with a protection status, he came to Ethiopia to visit his family and stayed for more than 90 days, which was not allowed by law by the Swedish Migration Agency for people who have a protection issue in the country of origin, then when he returned back to Sweden after the lengthy stay in Ethiopia, they cancelled his protection status and he received a deportation order. Then, he took this issue to court without success. Finally, he decided to return with his wife voluntarily in 2023, and they returned. They do not have children.

□ Mered is a male returnee from Switzerland, who graduated with a degree in the field of economics. He worked as a civil servant for some time, then he started his own business selling construction materials before he migrated to Switzerland. He has a family with three children, and the income is not enough to cover the expenses of the family, which forces him to migrate for better economic opportunities. Then, he travelled to Switzerland by paying money to brokers who facilitated his trip, and was able to travel to Switzerland with a tourist visa. Finally, he requested asylum but was rejected. They put him in camps, and he stayed 3 years waiting for the appeal response. However, He received the second negative. Finally, he decided to return voluntarily because the negative decision in the host country, coupled with leaving his family back home, forced him to decide to return to Ethiopia.

He said, “Without work, without education, what opportunities do I have there? “

□ Hiwot is a female returnee from Norway; her educational level is 12th grade completed. Before she travelled to Norway, she first travelled to Lebanon, Her trip was facilitated by an employment agency. Luckily, she got a good employer in Beirut and was allowed to meet with other Ethiopians on her vacation day. When she met other Ethiopians, they decided to travel to Greece by sea and managed to reach there. Then, they think that Norway is a good country in providing humanitarian protection and travelled to Norway and seek asylum there. Unfortunately, her request was not acceptable, and she lived for 16 years in the reception camp. She received USD 100 every two weeks, no work, no education, and free movement. She needs permission to go out from the reception centre. However, one staff member in the reception centre was helpful and allowed her to work at her home as a babysitter and paid her a small amount for the service. Finally, she realized that she was wasting her time in the camp and decided to return voluntarily in 2023.

She said, “ I spent 16 years moving between different camps. I never got married and don’t have children. Now that I am 45 years old, I feel like I lost that time without accomplishing anything. I feel like I lost that time without accomplishing anything. My friends are far away; they have children, and some of their kids have even graduated from university. Meanwhile, I spent 16 years for nothing.”

□ Girmay is a male returnee from Germany, he is a PhD holder in the field of agriculture. Before he migrated to Germany, he was an employee at the Ministry of Agriculture. He traveled to Germany for educational purposes i.e., he got a scholarship to attend his Master's degree there. However, he continued his education to PhD level, and side by side he was doing very simple jobs to support his life. He spent 18 years there, but he couldn’t get a job in his field of study in Germany. Then, he believed that if he returned to Ethiopia, he might get a job in his area of expertise and decided to return after 18 years in 2023, Unfortunately, he did not get a job until the date of the interview. He is single. During the interview, when the researcher asked the question of marital status, he said, “Please find me a wife if you can, and smile. “

□ Geda is a female returnee from Sweden. She is a single mom, divorced from her husband. Before she migrated to Sweden, she had her own beauty salon, and she was earning a good income from her business. However, to get a better education for her daughter, she travelled to Sweden (she has a relative there) using a tourist visa, her trip was facilitated by brokers, and she paid a lot for the trip by selling all the property she had and adding by borrowing from family. Once she reached Sweden, she requested asylum, but the decision was negative. Then, after 3 years spent in Sweden decided to return to their home country.

She said, “Starting a business from scratch again is very challenging, but I am thankful by nature, so I don’t complain.”

□ Bekele is a male returnee from Germany. Before he migrated to Germany, he had a small shop and was leading a decent life with his wife and his daughter. However, one day a broker approached him and said, “If you go to Germany, you can earn more money, and you can also support your family”. The broker promised to facilitate the travel if he paid ETB 300,000. Then he paid and managed to reach Germany. In Germany, he requested asylum but was not accepted and was put in a remote area in the camp/very far from the capital city, Berlin/. He stayed 3 years and developed depression and decided to return voluntarily.

He said, “No work, no education, I don’t even see any black people in the area, and no one speaks my language (Amharic) there. Even there were days I went to the camp manager to tell him my interest in returning to my country, but he doesn’t understand Amharic, I don’t speak his language, I cried and returned to my room.”

□ Finally, Abraham is a male returnee from Malta. Before he migrated, he was a student in 8th grade in Addis Ababa. He travelled to Malta with his friends through the Northern route/corridor. First, they travelled to Metema, then Sudan, then Libya, then by sea to Italy, then finally, they reached Malta. His first flight experience was when he returned from Malta to Ethiopia in 2022; he had never flown before. He faced different challenges and traumatic experiences in Libya, including the slaughtering of people. Unfortunately, his asylum was not accepted by the host country / Malta, and he was detained for more than 8 years in Malta. However, he was not willing to tell the reason for his detention/the crime he committed during the interview.

4.3 Challenges of Returnees During the Reintegration Process

The below are the challenges identified by the study from study participants .

4.3.1 Economic

The data gathered from an interview with the returnees showed that the primary obstacle to reintegration is an economic challenge, which all returnees expressed as a significant concern. After a long year's absence, they come with empty hands and with very minimal reintegration support. On the other hand, the family's expectations are high, believing they come from a developed country (Europe). The minimal support given by fewer organizations cannot help them restart their lives again in their home country. "I spent more money to travel to Europe than I received as reintegration support after I returned." Mered

One of the female returnees, Hiwot, mentioned how the economic challenges are a significant barrier in her experience as a returnee. She described how these challenges manifest in various ways, impacting her ability to reintegrate into her community effectively.

The economic challenge is unbearable. I received a small amount from IOM, then borrowed money from friends to start a small snack house around Goro. Unfortunately, my business area was demolished for corridor development, leaving me unemployed and in debt. Life has become a struggle; sometimes I hide from friends because I fear they might ask for the money I owe them. (Hiwot)

The study shows how the economic challenge resulted in a social challenge and shows that the three dimensions of challenges are interrelated.

My family was unhappy with my decision to return, they said you become a burden for us /an additional mouth to feed/ ” My family was amazed by me, how a person returns from Europe to Ethiopia, they believe everyone in Europe is rich and expects money from me. (Mered)

The data gathered from an interview with the returnees showed how the inflation in the country's economy made the economic reintegration more challenging. Girmay expressed reintegration support provided for returnees is very minimal and can not support restarting life again.

The economic reintegration I received is very minimal, only EUR 400, which could be one /two months' house rental fee. With the current inflation in the country, how can a person start a business with EUR 400? He questioned? still now I don't have work, the organization that works on reintegration should stop thinking that all returnees become businessmen after return, they should support them in other ways. also, I need a job, and they should work on job matching/placement. Girmay

The above idea was also supported by another participant, who said

The reintegration support is not enough, I used the support I received to cover six months rental fee of business premise, I bought shop items by borrowing money from family, this was very challenging, when I asked them lending money no body believes me, they said are you kidding you come from Norway, don't you have money? Geda

In general, the economic support given to returnees is very small and can't support them to restart their lives.

4.3.2 Social

In addition to the economic challenge, returnees from Europe face stigma from society. somehow, most people in Ethiopia are aware of returnees from the Middle East, but not from Europe. Since the number is minimal, most people do not think that people can return from Europe. The study revealed that there is a high stigma associated with return, especially when

return is from Europe, the stigma will be more worsen; people consider return as a failure of a goal /dream. Most people negatively comment on their decision to return.

All participants said, the community asked us the question, 'Why do you return to Ethiopia? "If I were you, I would not set foot to return to Ethiopia. If we get a chance, we would all migrate anywhere where let alone Europe.

The study revealed that there is a strong resistance from family and community to returning home and associated social problems with being a returnee, such as stigma, discrimination. One of the females described her family's reaction to her plan of return as follows

Before I returned, I called my family and informed them I wanted to return, and all they shouted and questioned my health, 'Are you crazy?' Why do you return to Ethiopia? There is nothing? People were killed, kidnapped, and no peace. Why do you want to come from heaven to hell? However, my situation was not heaven as they assumed; I was living in the camp for 16 years without work, education, and freedom of movement.

Hiwot

Furthermore, the study shows that there is a partial treatment for diasporas and returnees among the community, which makes the reintegration more challenging. One of the participants, Abiyot, described "If you come for vacation, people treat you differently, you might get very special treatment as diaspora,(Smiled), but if you are a returnee, people undermine you, it's weird for many people to return from a developed country to Africa". Abiyot

The study shows that in addition to the economic hardships, social issues have challenged the returnees. Social reintegration problems include stigma and discrimination

Girmay said not only the society, the stigma started from your family, when I come back after 18 years, my family denied me to inherit from our parents' property, they erased me

from the list of the children, now I took this issue to court and still the case is under the court.

4.3.2.1 Accessing Social Services. All participants mentioned that accessing all kinds of social services is very challenging. For instance, having a job has a great social value, on top of the economic benefit; having a job gives a chance to reconnect with the community, to create social networks. However these returnees live abroad for longer periods and when they come back and they need to have a kebele ID to start any activity, which is difficult to get, unless a person live at least 6 consecutive months and have a family to be collateral for him he cannot get the kebele Id which is a prerequisite for any process such as getting business license, to sign an agreement even to open a bank account.

The laissez-passer(LP), I got from the Ethiopian embassy in Germany for my return travel expired within a month after my return, then I didn't have any identification document, and I couldn't get a new one from kebele because of their rules/laws, I was obliged to stay for 6 months idle, and I started my business after 6 months. Now, this is the so-called digital /faida/ ID that may solve the problem. Hiwot

The study revealed that there is a challenge in accessing health services, and this makes the reintegration unsuccessful from the social dimension.

I was sick, but I couldn't access the health facilities; they asked me, ' Are you a resident of this kebele?' If so, show us your ID; if not, we cannot give the service, then I am compelled to visit the private clinic and spend too much money on the treatment.

In General, accessing social services is the biggest challenge mentioned by almost all participants.

There is a high bureaucracy to access social services, though I did not face this kind of problem abroad as a migrant, here to get a business license. I cried. I was crying on my way/on the road like a crazy person, it is difficult to accept that you get all these problems in your own country. (Geda)“Still, I couldn’t start my business due to the bureaucracy in the government office.” Gedamu

4.3.3 Psychological Challenges

All participants mentioned that being a returnee has its psychological impact; however, being a migrant has its psychological impact. Though the problem started in the host country, the situation they faced after their return did not help them recover from their stress. Two participants diagnosed with mental illness and taking medication still now, the remaining returnees had some level of stress, but now they are ok.

I was healthy before migrating to Germany, but I spent 11 years idle, and I was stressed. I started smoking cigarettes and using drugs, then finally they diagnosed me with substance-induced schizophrenia, and I am in treatment now. I was in a psychiatric hospital last month. (Gedamu)

The study further revealed that the migrants who returned home faced a psychological problem that hindered the reintegration process and made it more challenging.“I was very young and versatile when I traveled to Malta, but due to the traumatic incidents I have witnessed in my journey, and I was detained for 8 years, I developed depression, and I am taking medication now”. Abrham

The psychological problem poses a significant barrier to the reintegration of returnees and affects their economic success. “I was healthy before I migrated to Norway, but there

I couldn't adapt to the weather, and I have no work. I was in a stressful situation, I was taking medication (sleeping aid), but after returning, I am fine". Hiwot

The findings of this study showed that the returnees used different coping mechanisms to overcome their psychological problems/situations. Four participants went to "Tsebel"/spiritual treatment with holy water as a coping mechanism for their psychological problems. They said, "Prayer, going to church, Monastery helped us a lot." The other two said they are following up on their treatment in the hospital, including psychotherapy counselling, and the counselling helped them a lot. Two participants said they chew "khat" and smoke cigarettes as a coping mechanism.

4.3.3.1 Isolation. The study revealed that as returnees were detached for a longer period from their social ties, it isn't easy to reestablish the social ties and friendship again; in addition, people's attitude makes them isolate themselves. *"After returning, I didn't meet my friends because I am afraid of their comments". Girmay*

4.3.4 The key findings of the Key Informant Interview.

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews using semi-structured questionnaires with three key informants, one from RRS(a Governmental institution) and two from IOM (an intergovernmental organization). All key informants have been working as reintegration officers for 5 years or more, and their educational background is, two have an MA in social work, and one MA in psychology. The interview with the key informant showed that there are minimal available services for returnees in their organization. they said, All KI said,

For voluntary returnees, assistance started before the migrant departed from the host country, by virtual counselling, to inform the migrant about available post-arrival services and the current situation of the country that would help the migrant to make an

informed decision. After return, there are post-arrival packages which include reception assistance-airport pick up, temporary accommodation, transportation, economic reintegration support, and psychological support.

The finding of the key informant interview shows that the government has a strong commitment to supporting returnee migrants but lacks the resources to do so. All the key informants respond that the Ethiopian government is committed to supporting the safe and dignified (voluntary) return of its citizens from anywhere. The embassies in Europe issue laissez-passer, for those who don't have a travel document to help their return. This is one indication of the commitment the government has.

All three key informants acknowledge that returnees from Europe face economic, social, and psychological challenges. One key informant said,

To be honest, the amount of reintegration support is just a name it doesn't have value" the other KI said " Always it is easy to forget the invisible ones, so that mostly we do not emphasize the social and psychosocial reintegration of the returnee " it is the most neglected component but crucial to successful reintegration, at least we give economic support even if it is small.

Another key informant highlighted several social challenges, including "social rejection and stigma, as returning is often viewed as a failure. Additionally, there are security concerns in some areas of Ethiopia, where returnees face threats that hinder their ability to live their lives properly."

The key informant from RRS mentioned that

They have assisted 239 returnees from Europe in the last 5 years, and they observed many challenges such as a Lack of decent livelihood opportunities, limited access to social networks,

and severe medical & mental health problems. Many experienced serious medical, psychosocial, psychological, and/or psychiatric issues. Female migrants are more vulnerable than males, experiencing unique health, social, and economic challenges as well as stigmatization. Many returnees come back empty-handed, as their earnings were used for debt repayments, general consumption, and remittances to their families.

All key informants believed that there were challenges that made reintegration unsuccessful. They divided the challenges into three levels.

At the individual level _ “returnees' lack of interest, skill, and experience, difficulty rebuilding community relationships, disorientation of culture since they live abroad for a long time, feeling of shame and embarrassment for not achieving success in Europe, are some of them.”

At the Structural level, “Lack of coordination among service-providing organizations and bureaucracies was mentioned” by the key informants

At the Community level, “Stigma and discrimination, negative community perception of returnees, considering return as a failure, and limited institutional support for psychological problems are among them.

In addition, this study further revealed that there is a policy gap towards reintegration and recommended advocating for that. The key informants recommended that there is a need to improve reintegration support for Ethiopian migrant returnees from Europe by providing comprehensive assistance that addresses economic, social, psychosocial, and institutional challenges. These could include scaling up psychosocial services, initiating a family and community reintegration approach, promoting and offering various entrepreneurship and vocational training programs that align with local labor market demands, empowering returnees

to become self-reliant, and strengthening local institutions to support return migrants. Strong collaboration among stakeholders is essential for the better and more sustainable reintegration of Ethiopian returnees from Europe.

The other main gap identified by the three key informants is “absence of a comprehensive national database that tracks returnees’ profiles, needs, vulnerabilities, and protection concerns and responds to respond for their needs”

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that returnees from Europe encounter economic difficulties, social stigma, and psychological issues that hinder their reintegration into their home countries. This contrasts with the IOM Global Migration Report 2024, which emphasizes the positive contributions of migration to development in both host and origin countries. In this study, however, it is evident that returnees often become a burden on their home economies due to insufficient employment opportunities, limited reintegration support, and Various social challenges. The new economic /household theory relates that the decision to migrate is not taken at the individual level alone but rather at the household level or with the family. (Mohammad, 2013:187)” In addition, this study also revealed that not only the decision to migrate but also the decision to return is mostly decided at the family/household level. This research does support the report presented by IOM regarding the challenges faced by returnees when rebuilding their lives in their home countries after return. This study identifies three key dimensions of these challenges, aligning with the IOM's definition of reintegration. According to the IOM, “Reintegration” involves assisting returnees in achieving economic stability, accessing social services, and reconnecting with their communities, enabling them to live with dignity. The

International Organization for Migration (IOM). This study indicates that there is a need for coordination among different stakeholders for effective reintegration at the individual, community, and structural levels to address economic, social, and psychosocial needs. This research finding supports the findings by Andersson (2022) regarding the lack of a comprehensive policy for returnees and not much focus on returnees, but there are non-governmental organizations that work on return and reintegration, but not been significantly addressed. Wubshet (2021) in his findings indicated that Ethiopian migrant returnees, especially women deported from Saudi Arabia, face significant challenges when trying to reintegrate into their home country. These challenges include a weak economy, a lack of job opportunities, and the loss of social networks, which can lead to psychological issues like anxiety and depression. These findings are also applicable for returnees from Europe, the difference is that the intensity of social stigma, social stigma is higher for returnees from Europe than for returnees from the Middle East due to a lack of awareness; somehow people are familiar with returns Middle East but not from Europe. This research paper indicates that there is a need structured approach to successfully re-integrate returnee migrants to their home countries, as it was indicated by Arowolo (2000). This paper indicates that the economic challenge of returnees is a substantial problem for reintegration, and this finding is in conformity with the study conducted by Nisrane et.al (2017) indicated that economic reintegration, which in its basic form is about securing a livelihood, is a challenge for most returnees. The reason relates to the migration settings, preparedness, and reintegration assistance in the home county.

CHAPTER SIX

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the challenges of returnees from Europe during the reintegration process. The foregoing chapters examined the different dimensions of challenges returnees are facing and some coping mechanisms utilize in order to cope with the challenge were studied. The research questions were examined through a qualitative approach in the form of semi-structured interviews. A review of the literature was presented corresponding to the research topic on the challenges of returnees from Europe. Finally, the findings obtained was provided and discussed.

In general, the findings clearly showed that migrant returnees have faced multifaceted challenges upon returning to Ethiopia. Participants reported significant economic, social and psychological challenges posed upon return that affect their reintegration. Especially the economic challenge is a significant challenge they faced as they return with limited financial resources and high expectations of their family on the other hand causes a problem in their life to reintegrate back. Social stigma associated with returning from Europe further complicates their reintegration process, as many returnees experience rejection and negative perception, both from their communities and their families. Additionally, psychological well-being emerged as a critical concern, with many returnees dealing with mental health issues that arose from their migration experience.

The information from key informants also supports these findings, revealing systemic problems present in the reintegration process, including insufficient economic assistance and a lack of comprehensive psychosocial support.

The finding shows that most returnees use spiritual exercises as a coping mechanism, and some also use professional support to overcome psychological problems. And others use negative coping mechanisms.

6.2 Recommendations

- Economic Support: allocate enough support that is sufficient to cover their basic immediate need, including housing, medical, and business startups. In addition, the economic support should be supported by skill training and strong follow-ups
- Social challenges: address the social stigma deeply rooted in society towards the returnees by awareness creation to change perception about returnees, especially from Europe. Implement community awareness campaigns to change perceptions about returnees,
- Psychological_ strengthen the existing psychological services and create social networking events for returnees/establish a support group among returnees that will help to share their experiences and coping mechanisms of their challenges, and the government should develop comprehensive mental health programs that address the specific needs of returnees, such as counselling and therapy
- Social services – improve the service provision by simplifying the bureaucratic process and establishing- one-stop service for returnees will reduce the challenge
- Establish a National Reintegration Committee: Create a steering committee to oversee reintegration efforts, ensuring collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations. This committee should develop policies and guidelines to support returnees effectively.

- Develop a Comprehensive Database: Establish a national database that captures the profiles, needs, and vulnerabilities of returnees. This will help to provide well-tailored support that can inform the intervention of the returnees' reintegration
- Partnership- There is a need for coordinated effort among various stakeholders, such as local partners and private institutions, to support returnees through job placement and training, for successful and sustainable reintegration support. There is a need for coordinated efforts among various stakeholders to facilitate successful reintegration

6.3 Implication

This research has implications for social work in developing tailored and specialized programs that will address the unique needs of returnees, to work on advocacy, to ensure returnees have access to social services such as health, employment, and facilitate community-based programs that promote acceptance and integration of returnees, reducing stigma and fostering social connections.

Furthermore, these thesis findings will be relevant for other researchers to conduct a wider study of returnees' challenges, and policymakers can utilize the insights from this thesis to develop informed strategies and interventions by understanding the unique challenges returnees from Europe face. (IOM,2019)

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Appendix 1

Interview guide for selected returnee migrants from Europe

Dear respondents

I am doing this study as a requirement for my MA study in Social Work at Addis Ababa University. The general purpose of this study is to identify and understand “ The Challenges Faced by Ethiopian Migrant Returnees in the Reintegration Process: The Cases of Returnees from Europe. I believe that as a returnee, you can give genuine information on the challenges you experienced during the reintegration process. Therefore, for the success of this study, I would like to request that you give your genuine opinion. Your opinions will remain confidential.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate.

A. General information

I. Instruction: The section is meant to collect personal information about you.

1. Sex: _____

2. Age: -----

3. Year of return: _____

4. The country from which the return took place _____

5. How many years did you live outside of your home country before returning? _____

6. Marital status: _____

7. Family size _____

8. Educational level: _____

B. Interview guiding questions on reintegration challenges at the individual/structural and community levels

1. Can you describe your life before you migrated? Did you have a job? What did you do?

2. Tell me about your reasons for migrating/deciding to leave your homeland?

3. Tell me about what you were doing in the host country before your return: If yes, what was your monthly income? Type of work? Is it legal or black?

4. Tell me about the main reason you returned.

5. What were your initial feelings upon returning to Ethiopia?

6. Tell me your family or community's reaction to your return.

7. Could you explain the difficulties you encounter in accessing social services (healthcare, education, employment, etc

8. Did you receive reintegration support? was it helpful to restart life/overcoming your challenges? If yes, please answer question No.8

9. Tell me the type of reintegration assistance you received. By which organization?

10. Tell me the challenges you faced during reintegration process

11. What are you doing right now? (Working, studying, looking for a job, taking care of family, etc.)

C. Psychological and Emotional Perspectives:

1. How did you feel at first when you returned?
2. What was the toughest or best day for you since returning?
3. How has your migration experience affected your mental health upon returning
4. Did you receive any support for mental health or emotional well-being after returning

D. Interview guiding questions for coping mechanisms and recommendations

1. What are your best strategies, remedial/coping skills that you have used to minimize and deal with those challenges you faced after your return?
2. Do you think returning was the right decision for you
3. What should be done better in the reintegration process
- 4..Are you thinking about going abroad to live/work again?

Appendix 2

Interview guide for in-depth interview of selected key informants

Dear respondents

I am doing this study as a requirement for my MA study in Social Work at Addis Ababa University. The general purpose of this study is to identify and understand “ The Challenges Faced by Ethiopian Migrant Returnees in the Reintegration Process: The Cases of Returnees from Europe. I believe that as a staff member of a service provider organization, you are in a better position to provide challenges you experienced during the reintegration process. Therefore, for the success of this study, I would like to request that you give your genuine opinion. Your opinions will remain confidential. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate

A. General information

I Instruction: The section is meant to collect personal information about you.

1. Name:-----
2. Educational background
3. Duty station
4. Position:-----
5. How long have you been working in this position? _____
6. Your role related to Migrant returnees from Europe?
7. Tell me about the government's position towards returnees from Europe.

B. Available Services and Challenges

1. What kinds of services are available for returnees from Europe, and how effective are they?
2. According to your experience, what are the most common challenges faced by Ethiopian migrant returnees from Europe during reintegration?
3. How many returnees from Europe does your organization receive every year? Especially the last 5 years

C. Recommendations for Improvement

1. What recommendations would you make to improve the reintegration process for Ethiopian migrant returnees from Europe?
2. How can collaboration among stakeholders be enhanced to support returnees from Europe?
3. Are there any policy gaps? And how government support is provided through the reintegration process in addressing the challenges.

Appendix 3

Consent form

The Purpose of this research study is to identify the challenges faced by returnees from Europe in economic, social, and psychological dimensions during the reintegration process. I recognize that the research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an MA study in social work.

I _____ agree to be interviewed and take part in this study about my experience of reintegration. I understand that my participation is on a voluntary basis, and I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that all the information I provide will be confidential, and my name will be anonymous throughout.

I agree to have the interview recorded. Yes /No

Signed: _____

Date:

