ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

THE POST ADOPTION REUNION EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES OF EMAYE ADOPTEE'S FAMILY ORGANIZATION

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A Thesis submitted to the School of Social Work Addis Ababa University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for Masters of Arts Degree in Social Work

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Date: December 25, 2025

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled as the ***"The Post Adoption Reunion Experiences and Challenges of Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization***" has been carried out by **Zerabiruk Desalegn,** ID Number: **GSE/8207/15** under my supervision. Therefore, I recommend that the student's thesis can be presented for review and open oral presentation.

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This thesis entitled ***"The Post Adoption Reunion Experiences and Challenges of Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization.***" has been approved by the following examiners, department head and SGC Coordinate in the partial fulfilment MA in Social Work.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- AIDS = acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
- CCYA = Commission for Children and Youth Affairs
- CNN = Cable News Network
- DNA = Deoxyribonucleic Acid
- EBS = Ethiopian Broadcasting Services
- FGD = Focus Group Discussion
- IDI = In Depth Interview
- MoLSA = Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
- MoWCA = Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
- NGO = Non-Governmental Organization
- PACA = Post Adoption Contact Agreement
- PAR = Post Adoption Report
- UNCRC = United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund

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ABSTRACT

Post Adoption Reunion is the reconnection between adoptees and their birth families or relatives after years of separation due to the result of Adoption. This is critical for both parties to emotionally reconcile and identity questions to be resolved. This study assessed the experience and challenges of post adoption reunion at Emaye Adoptee's family Reunion organization. The Organization was established on May 2021, and it deals with requests of adoptees who are seeking to reunite with their birth families. It has had successes in reuniting more than eighty adoptees with their birth families that includes providing the necessary legal and psychological support while maintaining the privacy and consent of the adoptees and their birth families. Even though the organization utilizes available means of collecting as much data and information for a timely reunion between adoptees and birth families, the research has identified considerable structural, organizational, social, psychological and emotional challenges in the process of reunification. The research utilized a qualitative research method, which involved six participants selected using purposive sampling technique to explore and understand the adoptees experiences and challenges in the post adoption reunion. The research utilized both primary and secondary data relevant to the study. As for the primary data, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with adoptees who have had successful reunions with their birth families, and with those who are still awaiting to be reunited with their birth families. The key informants were especially significant for an in-depth analysis of non-numerical data to realize the works of the Organization, its success and challenges. For both forms of primary data collection, digital meetings were made possible. Key findings reveal that false documentation of the adoptees, lack of recorded files, lack of critical investigation about the adoptees document and digital misinformation have been critical challenges to conduct post adoption reunions. By bridging the theories, the study emphasizes on the role of post adoption reunion within the perspective of Emaye Organization in providing holistic services and basic access to information for the adoptees who were raised in foreign countries. The significance of this research is to bring relevant contribution to an under-researched area of social policy and family studies.

Key Words: *Post Adoption, Adoptee, Reunion, Challenge, Experience*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Adoption is a common practice in most countries for years. It is derived from Latin word "Adoptio" and it is an act by which a citizen acquires the *Patria Potestas* (power of father) through the mere effect of the civil law, apart from any tie or relation of blood (Cumin, 1857). This differentiates the adopted children from legitimized children, who then be called natural because they physically sprung by *paterfamilias* (male head of the family) meaning adopted children being generally from a stranger. Hence, it is a legal process of becoming a non-biological parent to adopt a child or from anthropological research, it is intuitive of the processes central to the making of all kinship (Leinaweaver, 2018).

In the context of Ethiopia, International adoption can be defined as "a practice in which children in a position of need and/or in the absence of their biological parents, are sent from country of to an awaiting adopting family in another country, usually in the developed world". (Jimma & Fulas, 2023). The constitution proclamation no 1/1995 under article 36 sub article 5 states that the state shall accord special protection to orphans and encourage the establishment of institutions which ensure and promote their adoption. And so, adoptive parents must be from the age of 25 to 65 years. With the opening of adoption records and a movement towards greater openness in adoption in many countries, there has been a commensurate increase in the number of reunions between birth parents and their relinquished children. [1] Adoption reunion is a general term usually used when birth parents, adult adoptees and birth siblings reconnect while taking into account the various circumstances. There are often different actors who facilitate post-adoption reunion when birth parents and adoptees or siblings expressed some form of interest to be contacted.

Although there are positive attributes for the orphans being adopted, there are challenges that must be explored in the research during post adoption, specifically international adoption. It is known that Ethiopia banned the adoption of children by foreigners since 2018 amid concerns they face abuse and neglect abroad. On January 11th of 2018, CNN have reported that intercountry adoption made children "vulnerable to identity crisis, psychological problems, and violation of rights"

[1] Passmore, N. L., & Feeney, J. A. (2009). Reunions of adoptees who have met both birth parents: Post-reunion relationships and factors that facilitate and hinder the reunion process. Adoption Quarterly, 12(2), 100-119.

(Fenton, 2019). This record is not to illuminate that the conditions of adoption is entirely bleak. Rather, it suggests that there is a lack of rigor in the process of adoption and a possibility of a post-adoption reunion.

In most cases, adoption plays an important role in providing a secure and stable household for adoptees where they would have opportunities of growth in discipline/ethic, healthcare and education. When adoptees living abroad with their adoptive parents discover or are already aware that they are not related, or in the condition where the adoptive parents explain the relationship they have with the adoptees, questions of identity, curiosity of their roots, and get inspired to give-back are among the positive perks to be expected. To interpret these questions, post-adoption reunion must be carefully processed.

A post-adoption reunion process typically requires the availability of credible information. However, obtaining information has often been challenging as records are misplaced, mismanaged and in most instances, lacking. The digital age contributes to getting families closer with the help of large network and connection pools that bring people together. Although the aid of digital landscapes proves to be helpful, it tends to go in length of knocking many digital doors. In this process, challenges of credibility of sources are faced due to the perceived economic and social prestige of an adoptee who has been living abroad and is in search of their biological family. The process is emotionally and psychologically challenging, as Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization described it. Many face identity crises and leads them to stress, depression and social anxiety, according to the Organization. These challenges coupled with the long wait due to the lack of or mismanagement of their information and documentation produces difficulty in connecting to their roots.

The dynamics of post-adoption reunions in Ethiopia is a complex phenomenon and emotionally charged experiences, often influenced by a range of factors including cultural practices, socio-economic factors, legal considerations, and personal circumstances. Navigating the dynamics of post-adoption reunion with sensitivity and care can lead to positive and meaningful outcomes for everyone involved. Capacitating adoption institutions and organizations on reunion through a well-studied research is imperative for cohesive and inclusive journey of an adoptee's social development and well-being.

1.2. Statement of The Problem

Ethiopia was one of the biggest source countries for international adoption. However, Child abuse and trafficking presented increasing challenges that brought adoption to its end in Ethiopia. In one notable case, the American daily newspaper "The Seattle Times" has reported that a couple in the United States were convicted of killing an adopted 13-year-old Ethiopian girl as well as the child abuse and assault of a 12-year-old hearing impaired Ethiopian boy in 2013.[2] These crimes and experiences faced by Ethiopian children resulted in the banning of adoption to curb the problems.[3]

The Parliament, hence, passed a legislation that banned international adoption in 2018. The ceasing of adoption of Ethiopian children is aimed at saving children from facing dire challenges. This comes to all families with good intentions wanting to adopt and Ethiopian families who would like to provide better opportunities for their children through adoption (Jimma & Fulas, 2023). The legal consequence of banning the adoption may cost families and children stable homes. Following the ban of international adoption, adoptive parents are still required to submit Post Adoption Reports (PAR), a document that provides information about the well-being of a child who has been adopted by foreigners, every three months, six months, and annually to the government. After the first year has been reported, it would be filed yearly until the child turns 18. The adoptive parents, home study agency, i.e., an agency where preplacement report is provided for evaluation of adoptive person's ability to parent a child, and the adoption agency are obligated to sign a commitment to these reporting requirements when submitting adoption documents.

The legislation is concerned with future adoptions and has to do, strongly, with taking back control of the lives of Ethiopian children and safeguarding them from gaps that may be caused due to the lack of stronger legal measures. Taking back control also means to know and become informed on identity of origins through open communications, and based on interest, it is the pursuit to reunite with the birth family. While such structured mechanism benefits all involved parties, the practices mentioned are not widely practiced and hence, create gaps in the legal framework of post-adoption reunion.

[2] Solomon Alemu Feyissa, M. D. MANDELA: THE LEGACY.

[3] Shelley A. Steenrod (2021): The Legacy of Exploitation in Intercountry
Adoptions from Ethiopia: "We Were under the Impression That Her Birth Parents Had Died",
Adoption Quarterly, DOI: 10.1080/10926755.2021.1884157

On the other hand, it is stated that in the background of the study that there is an absence of adoptees' proper documentation for Emaye Organization to facilitate post adoption reunion. These issues lead to many difficulties on adoptees seeking to reunite with their birth family such as psychological problems, identity crisis, trauma, etc. It might suggest that there are two indications; first is that there are difficulties in tracing biological families and legal barriers in allocating original birth certificate from a practical standpoint. Second is dealing with identity issues and adoptees seek for emotional and psychological support from reunion organizations due to the limited information they've got about their birth families. To address these challenges, protection of documentation should be recognized as it is essential for encouraging the reunion process with birth families.

The aim of post adoption reunion, as explained in the introduction, is to create the space where adoptive parents, adoptees, and birth families come together and reconnect. This benefits the adoptees feeling of control of their personal life, having information and greater understanding of their origins and helps them resolve the questions of identity. Different countries for instance Colombia, India, and South Korea facilitate Post Adoption Contact Agreement (PACA), where there is an alliance between three parties; adoptive parents, adoptees, and birth families defining the types and frequency of contacts that birth families will have with a child after adoption has taken place. Hence, the need for strengthened legal systems to facilitate reconnection between the adoptee and their birth family is favorably argued in this research.

Reunion organizations such as Emaye face many problems but the very specific one that led to many issues is the lack of documentation of adoptees and spread of falsifications from scammers who claims to be a relative. Majority of adoptees' documentation that have been put in governmental agencies have not been utilized properly, which makes it difficult for post adoption reunion. The description given by the Organization includes the documents of adoptees getting lost in governmental agencies and inaccurate information of adoptees being written in the files.

Throughout the process, adoption agencies could help with post adoption reunions in a number of ways, including: providing a support system; balancing power dynamics; providing services on the adoptee's terms and helping adoptees know their roots. However, after the adoptive parents have taken the adoptees to the foreign country promising to raise them as their own, they don't usually report to the adoption organization about the status of the adoptees because there is no binding law.

Hence, the address of the adoptees would get lost and makes it hard for the birth families to reconnect with them. And also, due to lack of legal binding of post adoption reunion, birth parents are unable to understand their rights and know the status of their children. Many birth families who placed children for adoption expect that they would receive updates and that their child would return as an adult. The lack of such important and vital information and communication poses as a significant problem that influences the post-adoption reunion process. Hence, this research puts forth mechanisms that can improve the communication between the families.

Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization has had successes in reuniting families of adoptees. Much of the success is attributed to the increased use of communication tools that speeds up an efficient process of reunification. Even though the organization has still maintained to provide its services of reunification, instilling the best practices by the organization enables structural prototype of post-adoption reunion. Moreover, the research focuses on enlisting the challenges that need a shift to the policies regarding adoptees and their reunion.

The academic and scholarly study of post-adoption reunion of Ethiopian adoptees is an area that has not been thoroughly studied and the consequence of the academic, social, structural and legal gaps are experienced by adoptees who are curious to discover and reconnect to their roots. The research provides important findings in the attempt to minimize the gaps in the contemporary challenges of post-adoption reunion. With the rise of usage of social media as a platform to discover and connect with biological families, the research provides nuanced recommendations that considers the challenges and benefits of technological advancements.

This research argues that through the experiences in Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization, post adoption reunion must be examined carefully through research on how the three parties; the adoptive parents, the adoptee, and birth families reconnect and establish a harmonious relationship based on a regulated system that can be applicable. Despite the dynamism of emotional complexity between the three parties during post adoption reunion, this research focuses on assessing the structural gaps that challenge processes of post- adoption reunion in the Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization and the opportunities that the reunion would bring to the individual, family and country level and provide recommendations that are important in bringing the necessary legal amendments, policy evaluation, policy review and possibly new policy change.

1.3. Objectives

1.3.1. General Objective

The primary objective of this research is to explore and analyze the challenges and opportunities associated with post-adoption reunions in the context of Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization. It aims to provide evidence-based insights and actionable recommendations that can facilitate more meaningful, ethical, and emotionally sustainable reunions between adoptees and their biological families.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The study seeks to address the general objective through the following specific aims:

- To examine the legal and social challenges faced by adoptees during the post adoption reunion process at Emaye Adoptees' Family Organization.
- To investigate the role of social media and digital technologies in facilitating or complicating the search and reunion for adoptees and their families in the current context.
- To identify and assess the key opportunities that exist in Emaye adoption reunion landscape;
- To evaluate the current practices and interventions offered by organizations such as Emaye Adoptees' Family Organization in supporting reunion.

1.4. Research Questions

In alignment with research objectives, the following key questions guide the inquiry:

- What are the main legal and social challenges faced by Ethiopian adoptees during post adoption reunion?
- How is social media influencing the post adoption search and reunion process among Ethiopian Adoptees and their birth families in the current context?

- What are the key opportunities and prospects that Emaye provides in the post adoption reunion landscape?
- What strategies are being employed to facilitate the search, reunion, reintegration for adoptees in the focus of Emaye Adoptees' Family Organization?

1.5. The Significance of the Study

This study would hold substantial significance in addressing the gaps in knowledge and understanding surrounding post-adoption reunion experiences in Ethiopia, particularly through the lens of the Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization. This study would offer a timely and relevant contribution to an under-researched area of social policy and family studies.

The findings from this research would be vital for shedding light on the lived experiences, emotional journeys, identity negotiations, and systemic challenges faced by adoptees and their biological families during and after the reunion process. In doing so, the study would provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in post-adoption reunions, which would be often shaped by legal, emotional, cultural, and transnational dynamics.

Given the limited scholarly attention to post-adoption reunions in Ethiopia, this study would be expected to serve as a foundational reference for future research in the field. Moreover, the insights generated could play a significant role in informing legal reforms, policy evaluations, and the development of more comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and ethically responsible post-adoption policies. It could lead to the revision or creation of frameworks that better support adoptees and their birth families, both emotionally and structurally, during the reunion process.

Additionally, this study would contribute to the broader academic literature on adoption and post-adoption family dynamics, particularly in non-Western and Global South contexts. It would provide a localized yet globally relevant perspective that challenges dominant narratives and encourages inclusive discourse.

Stakeholders such as academic institutions, researchers, policymakers, NGOs, civil society organizations, embassies, international adoption agencies, and human rights advocates would benefit from the study's findings. It would offer evidence-based insights that could inform

advocacy, program development, and support services aimed at facilitating smoother, more empowering reunions for adoptees and their families. By focusing on the experiences of members within the Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization, the research would not only amplify the voices of those directly affected but would also promote the recognition of community-driven efforts to navigate the post-adoption journey.

In sum, this study would be both timely and necessary. It would enhance understanding, inform policy, empower communities, and lay the groundwork for further academic and institutional engagement with the realities of post-adoption reunification in Ethiopia.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study would be limited to Emaye Adoptees' Family Reunion. It is bounded by an in-depth investigation on the legal rights and challenges associated with post-adoption reunions. Specifically, the research explores the legal frameworks governing post-adoption reunions. Given that post-adoption reunions involve complex emotional, cultural, and legal dimensions, the study seeks to understand the challenges faced by professionals in navigating these reunions when legal frameworks are not well-defined. Therefore, the scope of the study is narrowed to Emaye Organization offering a thorough explanation of its practices but there are limitations that include the potential lack of transferability to other post adoption reunion organizations.

Issue scope: study focuses on the experiences and challenges of post adoption reunion within an organization that have issues in allocating adoptees' documentation.

Geographic scope: research was conducted within Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focusing on lack of documentation and legal frameworks gaps, with Emaye Organization being the primary focus. By narrowing the scope, the researcher could explore the depth rather than the thickness capturing the nuanced realities.

Subject scope: the study focuses on adoptees and professionals with Emaye organization sharing experiences and challenges of post adoption reunion.

Time Frame: the research was conducted over a four-month period (January to April, 2025) with data collection and analysis.

Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the development of more informed, legally sound, and culturally sensitive practices in post-adoption reunions. This could potentially include recommending changes to adoption laws, the creation of post-adoption support services, and the establishment of better training for professionals involved in the adoption process. By gathering insights from social workers, adoption professionals, and legal experts, the research highlights the need for comprehensive legal guidelines and training programs to improve post-adoption reunion practices in Ethiopia.

1.7.Limitation of the Study

Due to scholarly research gaps about the complexities surrounding the post adoption reunion in the context of Ethiopia, it was difficult for this research to find abundant sources. Even though there are increasing evidence on adoption, the post adoption complexities in terms of emotional, social, and legal challenges from the perspective of birth family is something that should be explored more in the future directions. Therefore, the researcher has encountered limitations in accessing similarly conducted research that could potentially provide a context or offer comparative insights to strengthen the study.

Considering the constraints that the researcher had delt, this study aimed to be conducted at a single institution called Emaye Adoptees Family Organization focusing on the assessment of post adoption reunion experiences and challenges faced by the adoptees and bring forth a potential recommendation based on the data analysis and evidence from scholars. Undeniably, focusing on just one institution might not fully reflect other institutions from broader aspect, but it does offer a focused and manageable scope for in depth research and this presents a limitation in terms of generalizing the findings.

As the title indicates, it is a sensitive topic to be discussed from emotional, psychological and social perspective. To make a debate on this particular issue, many adoptees were not willing to give information due to them having a traumatic experience and due to preferred isolation. Therefore, finding participants to share their post adoption experience was difficult for this study. Despite the difficulties and adoptees living in a remote area, Emaye Organization was able to achieve this process by being transparent and communicating with the personnel who shared their experience to the researcher via zoom meeting and WhatsApp in a way that does not violate their privacy, and providing them support and guidance.

1.8. Definition of Terms

Challenge: from a psychological aspect, it can be defined as a situation, task, or a problem that is considered as difficult, new, or complex and presents the possibility of testing skills (resources) and it could be interpreted into an opportunity (Horikoshi, 2023).

Experience: the term "Experience" has a plethora of meanings from different fields of studies. However, for this thesis purpose, it could be defined as a multilayered event/phenomenon where individuals make sense of experience through cultural, cognitive and personal layers by attending to immediate relationships (Butler & Scott, 1992).

Post Adoption: it is the period after the finalization of legal adoption and it also refers to its services that includes information about a child's background and needs, medical care, mediating contact with birth families etc. (Teska, 2016). These kinds of services are crucial support for adoptive families who adopt children with complex needs. (Smith, 2014)

Reunion: it could be described as complex, ongoing and continuous lifelong process of developing relationships and a shared history (Landers et al, 2015). It could also refer to as the first contact of between an adoptee and a birth family (Child Welfare information Gateway, 2011b). It is worth to acknowledge the other term "Reunification" for the reason that it is heavily associated with Reunion. While reunion focuses on the initial contact between an adoptee and birth family after a long period of separation, reunification goes not just beyond meeting with birth family, but also returning to the one's motherland and includes having efforts and plans toward returning to birth families (Child Welfare information Gateway, 2011a). A satisfactory reunification is a result of adoptees reunifying with their birth family and how socially connected both are.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Review

Theories of post adoption reunion have been established by different scholars and evolving for more than decades alongside social changes and a growing understanding of adoption dynamics. It is essential as it provides important perspectives for adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, and different professionals in the field such as social workers and contributes a more enlightened practices and the experience of post adoption would be healthier. The main reason the theories needed to be listed in the following down below is because it addresses the emotional complex and motivations surrounding the reunification of adoptees with their birth families after post adoption.

2.1.1. Attachment Theory

This was a theory developed by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth and it was hypothesized that infants need to form a strong relationship with a primary caregiver so that their survival can be assured and helps to develop healthy social and emotional functioning. It is an established theory of human relationships and the most influential theory in psychology (Finkel & Simpson, 2015).

From the post adoption reunion perspective, this theory explores the impact of early separations and the characteristics of attachment in both adoptees and biological families. It also encourages that adopted individuals may experience strong emotions (feelings) of urging and loss for their birth parents, and the process of the reunion can assist them fulfill their need for connection and belonging.

2.1.2. Identity Formation Theory

Identity formation is an individual process where adolescents explore and commit to identity-defining roles and values in a diverse of life domains. Erik Erikson (1950), a psychoanalyst who developed identity formation theory, has introduced identity as a universal developmental task that provides the foundation for an individual's sense of wellbeing. To his defense, forming a clear and stable sense of identity is a key developmental task that individuals need to address throughout their lives particularly in transitional periods in which their sense of stability and certainty maybe undermined. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development states that there are eight stages of development and each stage is dealt with crisis. By resolving the issue, people develop

psychological strengths that helps them become and confident and healthy. From one of the stages, stage five's main task is the conflict between identity and confusion. Adolescents within a range of twelve to eighteen years of age ask different questions that might not be easy to answer such as; who am I? how do I fit into the society? Who do I belong to? Etc. therefore, they can resolve this conflict adequately by combining and integrating relevant identifications in a unique and personal way. Otherwise, they will remain in a state of confusion if they fail to resolve the identity task.

For this research, adopted individuals may struggle with identity questions, belonging, and sense of self-acceptance as they negotiate the process of reunion and combine their adoptive and birth family backgrounds into their sense of self. Overall, reunions could affect adoptee's sense of identity and this theory highlights the role of personal identity in shaping ones' experiences of post adoption reunion.

2.1.3. Family System Theory

This is a theory developed by Dr. Murray Bowen in 1946 whose theory views families as complex systems of interacting people and relationships and also views that families as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the unit's complex interactions meaning it hypothesizes that an individual's identity is shaped by their family relationships. Despite being different from attachment theory, it has also similarities and those similarities comes from a broader conceptual level including the theories' grounding in systems thinking and their concerns about intimate relationships by asking questions such as what brings/draws people together or what drives them apart. (Rothbaum et al, 2002).

In general, this theory is a framework that views family as complex systems, where each family members have a role and function including those of the birth family (Kim & Tucker, 2019). In the context of post adoption reunion, adoptees resolving their identity as a member of adoptive family while searching their biological origins can lead to complex emotional responses. Therefore, the reunion could be better understood through the perspective of family systems.

2.1.4. Narrative Theory

This theory is part of the concept called narratology, which is based on narrative structure by analyzing how stories are built and how it affects people's perception. Herman (2009) writes narrative as "the lived, felt experience of human or human-like agents interacting in an ongoing

way with their surrounding environment".[4] The narrative theory inspired by Aristotle emphasizes on "change of state" as it is an essential component of narrative (Liveley, 2019 & Piper et al, 2021).[5] The theory studies how stories support and helps people understand the world they live in. When it comes to this research specifically, it helps adoptees understand their origin and opens the door for reunification and also gives both adoptees and birth families an opportunity to share their stories and what they have experienced in their life.

In general, the reason why these theories are important is because reunion is all about asking the question "who am I?" and it is the central part of it. The researcher combined Identity Formation with Attachment, Family Systems, Narrative theories to reflect on the emotional, relational, and storytelling aspects of the process.

2.2. Empirical Review

The starting point of international has been stated that it was the beginning of the aftermath of Korean war where thousands of children were air lifted to the USA and Europe and it was revealed that most of them were mixed race (Selman, 1998). A reliable source called National Library of Medicine released an article written by Mary Mather in 2007 and have stated that after the devastation following the second world war, it initially resulted involving children moving from orphanages in Europe to North America. Hence, if a child can't be placed in a foster or adoptive family in their country of origin, international adoption could be considered as an alternative.

International adoption in Ethiopia started to increase after the 1974 revolution mainly in the capital city of Addis Ababa (Getahun, 2011). One of the factors that has increased international adoption is the famine that have caused millions of deaths and extreme poverty from 1983 to 1985. In the following years, the Ethiopian government proclaimed a constitution in 1995 stating that special protection needed to be provided to orphans; the establishment of institutions that promotes and ensures adoption needed to be encouraged; and organizations that care for orphans must be supported. It has been discussed that Ethiopia prohibited international adoption in 2018 amid concerns the children face abuse. The argument in past researches imply that such adoption denies heritage rights and often involved abusive practices. There are many disorders faced by adoptees

[4] David Herman. 2009. Basic elements of narrative.
John Wiley & Sons.
[5] Genevieve Liveley. 2019. Narratology. Oxford University
Press.

who were adopted through intercountry adoption and the major ones are: attachment disorder; eating disorder; language delay; sleeping disorder; medical problems; and behavioral problems (Ng et al, 2016).

But pre-2018, different researches have been done in different counties to examine the numbers of adoptees from Ethiopia taken by foreigners. Study was conducted and 1028 children from Ethiopia were adopted in Belgium within ten years' period from September 2005 to September 2015 and it was not published about the children's health status at arrival (Kesteren and Wojciechowski, 2017). It was also revealed that many children in Ethiopia became parentless due to the socioeconomic and health issues despite the country growing fast in economy. In United States of America between the year 1998 to 2009, seven thousand two hundred and eighty-four Ethiopian children were adopted by the US citizens and the department of state's annual report on visa issuance showed that 2277 adoption visas were issued to Ethiopian children in 2009 alone (Brittingham, S. 2010).

International wise, Ethiopia was ranked as the second country of origin of adopted children back in 2008. Study was conducted in Spain to determine the infectious disease in 251 children adopted from Ethiopia by reviewing the medical records between five years January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2010 and the mean age of the children that was taken was seven months. Based on the physical examination, abnormality was detected with 56.6%; issues include skin conditions, infections, and problems related to malnutrition (Ortiz et al, 2015). Most of the cases with children was studied on less than five years of age and their weight was below 3rd percentile when half of the sample was being examined, with malnutrition taking 65% and them being exposed to HIV putting on 4.8%. In general, the factors that necessitates intercountry adoption (ICA) whether it could be sending or receiving children are as follows: poverty, political factors including civil wars, disease, social and cultural factors etc. These are the root causes of parents in developing countries making their children available for adoption. (Assefa, 2018)

When it comes to post adoption from a social work standpoint, it could be considered as the period after has been adopted and placed into a new family (Neil, 2009). Social workers present the children's adoptability will rise with increases in the availability of post adoption services and it could help improve family health and function by focusing on challenges faced by families (Dhami

et al, 2007). In this phase, it involves ongoing support, services, and resources provided to the child and the adoptive family to help with the adjustment, bonding, and wellbeing of all involved.

Different cultures have their own views on adoption and that can affect whether and how reunions are pursued. Most researchers argue that post adoption reunions are always emotional and complex process due to the involvement of both navigating relationships and identities that have been shaped by adoption and this reunion process is heavily influenced by psychosocial and social dimensions (O'Neill et al, 2018; Clapton, 2018; Howe & Feast, 2001). From a conceptual wise, the emotional range of feelings experienced by the adopted, adoptees, and birth families includes joy, anxiety, and grief.

Historically, post-adoption service was established in 1989 Northern Island called the Health and Social Care Trust Post Adoption Service working on adopted adults accessing their birth origin information, learning about their identity during their pre adoption era and early life history that includes identifying details relating to their birth family[6]. The study was handled by a social worker from the team who had three decades of experience and it understood the complexities surrounding early life trauma, separation and loss, attachment and identity (Brodzinsky et al., 1992). It was understood and explained that the events of life could set off the desire for information about one's own origin (Wrobel, 2013 & Greco, 2015). It has been explained earlier that the adoptees want to understand who they are before they got adopted. In the case of Ethiopia, birth parents who gave their children for international adoption often feel guilt and regret because they don't know where or what their children are up to.

So, post adoption reunion refers to the act of adoptees and birth parents/families establishing contact after an adoption has taken place. It has contributed significantly to the understanding of post adoption reunion and the impact it has for all parties (Brodzinsky, 2011). Key points have been pointed out on past researches and it includes the emotional impact. In recent years, many adopted people internationally want to know their roots (where they came from and who they are) to find their missing parts in the hope of their questions get answered and according to Campbell (2001), it was stated that the most healing characteristic for adoptees is that they get to hear their

[6] Shields, D. E., & Nicholl, P. (2024). An Analysis of Reunifications Between Adopted Adults and Their Birth Relatives. Child Care in Practice, 1-17.

own story.[7] So, this suggests that from the emotional perspective, the narrative might redress the impact of adoption upon the adoptee. Legislation wise, laws governing adoption processes and access to records can crucially influence the ability of adopted individuals and birth families reconnect. According to Oregon Ballot Measure 58 (1998), a system founded by William S.U'Ren in 1898, it states that adoptees who are over the age of 21 have the right to access their original birth records and thus to learn the identities of their birth families.[8]

Setting out to find answers to their questions can be difficult for the adoptees due to the fears they have when trying to contact their birthparents. From a book called "Adopted" written by Willis and Baker (2022), it suggests that the adopted individuals fear that their birthparents wouldn't be interested to see their biological children or even could slam the phone when trying to call. The book also provides the importance to find peace in one's mind and being authentic in how the adopted live a life despite traumatic experience when separated from their birthparents. So as social workers, a pivotal role is played in facilitating the reunions and providing support throughout the communication process.[9] The Dynamics of communication where different social media platforms exist heavily influences the reunion process and this would help them find information, create family trees, and stay in touch.

2.2.1. Local and International laws on Post Adoption Reunion and the Experiences in Ethiopia

The Hague Convention, which was proposed by Russian emperor Tsar Nicholas II in the first Hague Peace Conference, is a collection of treaties and declarations that establishes rules for international issues such as human rights, peacekeeping, and the laws of war. The convention protects children and families from illegal adoptions abroad. According to Ratcliff (2010), it is suggested that the convention first prioritizes children to be kept in the family within the country of their origin and international adoption should be used as a last resort. It initiates safeguards to make sure that adoptions are in the child's best interest and their rights are respected. It also helps prevent the abduction, sale, or trafficking of children and most countries have signed this convention for the safety of children to know the status and make sure their wellbeing after

[7] Scordilis, M., & Becker, L. (2005). Post-adoption reunion: a South African perspective. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, *41*(1), 54-67.
[8] See Or. Rev. Stat. § 432.240 (2011).
[9] Baker, B., & Willis, J. (2022). Adopted: Love, loss, family and reunion. Massey University Press.

adoption has taken place. However, Ethiopia has not signed since the proclamation of constitution in 1995 until it banned international adoption in 2018 because according to Bunn (2019), Ethiopia have experienced corruption due to under regulated transnational adoption practices and also due to corruption, the country has experienced freezes on international adoption. Therefore, ratification on Hague Convention has not been done.

"Negarit Gazette" is the official government publication of Ethiopia that contains legal texts, government policies, and other official communications. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Negarit Gazette published a revised family code on Sene 27, 1992 E.C. and in chapter ten with regards to post adoption reunion, constitutes children who were adopted abroad. Under article 183 sub article 1 to 3 states:

- The adopted child shall retain his bonds with family of origin;
- The same shall apply to the spouse and the descendants of the adopted child;
- Wherever a choice has to be made between the family of adoption and the family of origin, the family of adoption shall prevail.

Hence according to the law, the relationship between birth parents and adoptees is not completely severed, but it does not mean birth parents have the right to entitlement. While these clauses imply dual belonging, the Ethiopian cultural and legal conception of adoption differs significantly from Western norms of full legal severance. Ethiopian law generally maintains a dual kinship model - one that affirms relational continuity with the biological family even post-adoption (Fekadu, 2015; Alula & Berhanu, 2007).

The third paragraph of Article 183 ("family of adoption shall prevail") carries significant psychological implications. While legally well-intended, it can undermine the emotional legitimacy of the birth family in reunion settings, creating a hierarchy that adoptees must emotionally reconcile. The Emaye organization's structured preparatory approach—psychotherapy, cultural sessions, and identity dialogues—appears implicitly designed to mediate this legal-emotional contradiction. note that adoptees in kinship-inclusive legal frameworks often feel "torn between gratitude and grievance." (Howe and Feast, 2000). Ethiopian adoptees, especially those raised in Western systems of closed adoption, may find the post-reunion space

emotionally complex due to unmet expectations of reciprocity from birth families. This does reflect the grief-anger dynamic outlined in study of adult adoptee psychology (Langrehr's, 2013)

Therefore, acknowledging Article 183 within psychosocial support structures is vital. Adoption practitioners and policymakers should make explicit the dual family paradigm during counselling and prepare adoptees to navigate *legal belonging* versus *emotional reconnection* (Verdon, 2018). This is particularly important in Ethiopia's context, where adoption was historically seen as custodial rather than severing - often with the expectation of future contact or return (MoWCYA, 2020).

Full termination of parental rights through adoption does not occur under Ethiopian law since the concept of adoption in Ethiopia is understood way differently than the west. Many of the families who placed children for adoption did so with the expectation that they would receive updates and that their child would return but in reality. The procedure of giving adoptees to the adoptive parents was if the birth families are alive, they would come to the court and give their child willingly to the adoptive parents. Additionally, adoptive parents would also appear in the court and confirm that they would take care of the child and take responsibility for it.

In 2017, amendment on the revised family code was needed in order to repeal special provisions that also applied to foreign adopters. The Revised Family Code proclamation no. 1070/2018 provides as: "Children separated from their family temporarily or permanently for various reasons are receiving different cares and support through the expansion of domestic care options. ICA was one alternative child care option… there is a downside of children experiencing identity crisis and other problem that will affect them psychologically and socially". Following the ending of intercountry adoption in Ethiopia on 2018, the Federal Supreme Court Cassation Division Bench has since interpreted the ban as neither applying to foreigners of Ethiopian Origin nor to foreigners adopting their Ethiopian spouse's children.

2.2.2. Consequences of Adoptees Not Reuniting with Their Birth Families

In the past history, the People's Republic of China has been the top "sending country" of adoptable children in the world in the last two decades. Over 130,000 children have been adopted by foreign parents and it was argued by scholars that Chinese adoptees grew up in first world societies where open adoption has become a norm (Smith & Siegel, 2012). in comparison to Western adoption

practice where there is more transparency, the adoptions from China are so called “closed” placements whom both the adoptive and birth parents have neither contact nor access to one another’s information and according to Johnson (2004), this has resulted children having been abandoned illegally.

The American Scholar and Author Betty Jean Lifton argues that adoptees not having biological knowledge/information about their birth families can cause emotional distress and a sense of detachment and that might get resolved through reunification (1988, 1994). Pertman (2000) called it the “living without a vital internal organ” when adoptees lack information about their personal background. Researchers recognize reunions with birth parents better understands the importance of biological connections for adoptees’ identity development.

The tragedies, inabilities, and failures of both the biological and the adoptive parents are reflected in the adopted child and his/her psychological development. The unfortunate death of the biological parents might be experienced as a bitter abandonment and the adoptees’ adoptive parents might explain to him/her that he/she was chosen but they may choose to believe they were stolen. Hence, no matter how hard the adoptive parents try to convince the adoptees that they are the “real” parents, adoptees may never completely ignore their birth parents and the fact that they gave them up, (Javier, 2007).

2.2.3. The Sustainable Relationship Between the Adoptees and Birth Families

According to Modell (1994, 1997, 2002), Carsten (2000), and Melosh (2002), it was argued that during reunion, there shouldn’t be a promise of reestablishment of kinship/family ties between the adopted person and their birth family. Kelly (2006) revealed the issue of whether an adoptee would call his/her birth parents “mum” and “dad”. As the study goes, birth parents have acknowledged that although they both are the biological parents, they are not exactly the “mum” and “dad” type because that right was not earned. There are two main themes to adopted people that was revealed by Gary Clapton (2018) in a literature when it comes to reunion. The first one is reunion is considered as a success due to however the relationship goes, it is considered as a worthwhile when meeting the birth families for its relief and most importantly helps develop a more cohesive sense of identity. The second one is the continuation of contacting the birth families.

Visitation rights or parenting time are legal rights and essential aspects of post adoption relationships, which allows birth parents to maintain connection with their biological child and being part of their child's life. So, the visitation agreement is what connects both the adoptive and birth parents and allows birth parents to see their child. Visitation and ongoing contact could be very difficult for prospective adoptive parents, specifically when the child returns from visits in a distressed state of mind (Javier, 2007). Even those who won't be having an ongoing contact have fears and make up fantasies about their birth parents. For a successful visitation, here are some of the key aspects of the rights to be considered:

Communicating openly: being open is the key part of healthy relationship after adoption has taken place. Adoptive parents have a responsibility of being honest and open minded to needs and concerns of all parties as it helps foster an everlasting relationship when navigating the joys and challenges of post adoption life together with the adopted person. Birth parents have the rights to discuss their concerns in regards to the visitation agreement.

Legal considerations: for the success of visitation, birth parents are encouraged to consult with an attorney to ensure their rights are protected and the agreement is legally contractual.

Flexibility and adaptability: if the goal is to ensure a positive and healthy relationship with a child, then birth parents must understand that visitation agreements might need to be modified over time; they should be willing to adapt to changing circumstances and be open to settlement.

Establishing boundaries: creating boundaries and maintaining privacy are essential as it helps in creating a safe and secured environment for everyone involved namely adoptive parents, adopted child, and the birth parents. It is crucial to discuss the important things when boundaries are established including the frequency, duration, location of visitations, providing guidelines and restrictions.

If the visitations with birth parents have no boundaries, the children could experience complex and confusing feelings even a conflicting sense of loyalty or protectiveness toward the birth as well as the potential adoptive parents and try to meet the needs of both at great emotional cost to themselves. They fear that they may lose their birth parents whom they share a history with even if it involves neglect or abuse. Despite the consideration of both neglection and abusive behavior, children who joined other permanent families expressed a need to maintain contact with biological families (O'Neill, 2004). This is because according to Edelstein (2002), it was stated that "children may feel they are put in the position of making an impossible choice between an old attachment

and the new experience of safety and consistency in a foster adoptive home". Due to the stress and worry, it often leads to an increased anxiety, acting-out behavior, temper and tantrums or withdrawal around visits. Therefore, there should be a counseling service given for all parties during these times so all can feel supported.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this part of the section, it is organized in several components: research design, sample technique, target population, method of data collecting, and data analysis to achieve the objective of the study and each component are discussed in detail about the rationale behind the chosen approaches. This chapter outlines the methodological framework employed to explore and assess the post-adoption reunion experiences and challenges of Emaye adoptees and their biological families. The primary aim is to ensure that the research process is methodologically sound and capable of addressing the core objectives of the study.

3.1 Research Design

In order to achieve the objective of this study, qualitative research methodology was employed. This approach is most appropriate for exploring the lived experiences, meanings, and subjective realities of individuals who have undergone complex emotional and social processes such as post-adoption reunions. According to Berg (2009), qualitative excels in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data derived from direct human interaction and observation, particularly through what participants say and do in real world contexts. It has also been posited by Hoberg (2001) that qualitative research method has a natural setting as a direct source of data since it mainly concerned with real situations as they unfold. Therefore, it uses detailed descriptions from the participants' perspective as a means of examining specific issues and problems under study. More specifically, as part of this research, in depth interview and focus group discussion are used as data collection tool.

The kind of qualitive research that the thesis used was phenomenological research as it tells an interesting story about the reunion and the adoptees experiencing it.[10] However, this type of research method has its own flaws and based on what Annisa (2024) has written, the pros and cons of phenomenological research are discussed down below.

[10] Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2). Melbourne: Oxford university press.

Pros

Provision of rich understanding: by exploring the lived experiences of adoptees, it would offer a perspective on post adoption reunion and able to provide possible recommendations.

Being Adaptable: the themes popping up from the collected data allows the research to adapt to new issues.

Cons

Limitation on Transferability: the findings could not be generalized to a larger population for the reason that of small sample size and it might not be applicable to other contexts.

Presentation Difficulty: the challenging part is presenting qualitative findings due to the fact that they are often complex and it does require careful explanation to be well understood.

Time consumption: it would be very lengthy and complex when gathering and analyzing rich qualitative data from a small number of participants.

Chapter Three (Section 3.1) described the qualitative design—FGDs with adoptees and IDIs with the organization's staff and affiliated professionals.

- **Psychotherapists:** are professionals who help adoptees on emotional, social, and mental issues. A type of professionals that are needed to create a resilience;
- **Legal advisors:** the organization has connection with lawyers in regards to providing directions on the legal aspects of contacting adoptees and especially legal advisors are need for the help with documentation of adoptees;
- **Anthropologists**: the organization was established to work on quest of origin and anthropologists are prepared to understand where to go and find the adoptees' family.

Using narrative analysis is important to preserve individual stories (Riessman, 2008) and thematic analysis is essential to identify shared patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this chapter addresses the research questions that are stated in chapter one:

- What are the legal and social challenges faced by adoptees during the post adoption reunion process at Emaye Adoptees' Family Organization?

- How is social media influencing the post adoption search and reunion process among Ethiopian Adoptees and their birth families in the current context?
- What are the key opportunities and prospects in Emaye organization post adoption reunion landscape?
- What strategies are being employed to facilitate the search, reunion, reintegration for adoptees Emaye Adoptees' Family Organization in supporting reunion?

Data sources include:

- Focus Group Transcripts from adoptees who successfully reunited and other adoptees still seeking reunion with their family and sharing their experience about their time with Emaye Organization.
- Key Informant Interviews with the organizations staff (directors, social workers) from Emaye, and representatives from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Affairs (MoWCYA) in regards to facilitating post adoption reunion and challenges with adoptees' documentations.

All interviews were conducted in English or French (with translation support when required) between January and April 2025. Translations where necessary followed standard back-translation procedures to ensure fidelity (Brislin, 1970).

3.1.1. Focus Group Discussion

In order to understand the issues revolving around post adoption reunion, FGD (Focus Group Discussion) was considered to be key factor for data collection as it makes the discussion more naturalistic and gives the participants freedom to share their thoughts. It is a technique where a group of individuals are assembled together to discuss a specific topic and it aims to draw from the complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of the participants through a moderated interaction (Cornwell & Jewkes, 1995; Hayward, Simpson & Wood, 2004; Israel, Schulz, Parker & Becker, 1998; Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan, 1996).

Hence, for the convenience of the discussion, the researcher created online zoom meeting and discussed with the adoptees about their experience and challenges after they have successfully

reunited with their birth parents including those who are still waiting to reunite with their birth parents.

Pros and Cons of using Zoom meeting for Qualitative Data Collection

Despite the participants for this particular research residing on remote areas, the researcher was able to collaborate with Emaye Organization and prepare online Zoom meeting to make it convenient for them to share their experiences, opportunities and challenges that they have faced during post adoption reunion. However, it did have its own merits and demerits when collecting Data from the online meeting. Based on what scholars have written, here are the discussions of pros and cons of using Zoom meeting down below. (Oliffe et al, 2021), (Keen et al, 2022).

Pros

Rich Data Collection: the online format enables participants having a natural flow of conversation and builds confidence for them to share their Post Adoption experience.

Very Cost-Effective: the online zoom meeting avoids the need to travel, which makes data collection budget friendly and time efficient for both the researcher and participants.

Having Applicable Features: there are functional features that the researcher used during the online meeting. From those features include recording the participants' voice, which could strengthen data management and enables the researcher to relisten and analyze what the participants have said.

More convenient and Flexible: this enabled participants to join the meeting from where they reside and this has made a major encouragement for participation and a better (flexible) scheduling.

Cons

Distractions: this is caused due to uncontrolled noise from the environment that could detract from participants' focus and engagement.

Issues with technical difficulties: the major drawback that the researcher have faced during online meeting is reliance on stable internet. Hence, poor connections could lead to dropped

calls, audio glitches/delays etc. this results the disruption of the flow of the session and a potential exclusion of individuals participating in the meeting.

Capturing Non-Verbal signs difficulties: observing and interpreting full body language and emotional cues via zoom meeting is difficult for data qualification compared to face-to-face interactions.

Zoom exhaustion: the virtual interactions' force could lead to mental exhaustion for both the researcher and participants that might affect the quality of data collection sessions.

3.1.2. In Depth Interview

In-Depth-Interviews are usually done one on one and it focuses on the interviewee's answers while paying attention to accompanying signals which could include emotion or body language. This type of interview has become very important recently due to the evolvement of technologies and that includes using telephone, video call and other forms of digital communication (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). Therefore, it allows the interviewing mechanism extend the geographical location of interviewees and it can be as effective as face-to-face interviews. For this research purpose, semi structured interview which is part of in-depth-interview has been conducted as it is useful in exploring participants perspectives, and gaining an in-depth understanding of the topic.

3.2. Study Area and the Organizational Background

The study was conducted in collaboration with the Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization, a non-governmental organization based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The organization serves as a pivotal institution for Ethiopian adoptees seeking to reconnect with their biological families and cultural heritage. It was founded in May 2021 by Ato Biruk Asfaw Abode along with two Ethio-French adoptees, Rebecca Reine and Ato Mulu Mengistu and it offers a unique blend of services aimed at facilitating the reunion process, emotional healing, and cultural reintegration. The organization is headquartered in Addis Ababa, specifically in the Summit area, Fiyel Bet 20-meter crossroads, and operates both nationally and internationally. The establishment of Emaye was driven by a shared vision to support Ethiopian adoptees who reside in foreign countries seeking to reconnect with their birth families and rediscover their cultural and familial identities.

Emaye's partner organization is called "*DesRacines NaissentdesAiles"*, which is located in France. It serves as a bridge between adoptees and their biological families, providing a holistic range of services designed to facilitate safe, respectful, and emotionally supportive reunions. So far since the establishment of Emaye adoptees' family organization and this research has been conducted, 80 adoptees have successfully reunited with their biological family and one hundred and fifty are in the process of reunification but there are still a lot of adoptees that wants to reconnect with their birth family. It also plays a pivotal role in raising awareness about the emotional and logistical complexities of post-adoption reconnection. The organization has garnered formal recognition and institutional support, including honorary members from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and has forged partnerships with international bodies such as the Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia.

The core services of the organization are structured with four components;

- **Reconnection Services**: the organizations' team dedicates themselves in working tirelessly to locate the adoptee's biological family and this process involves the use of historical records, local networks, and extensive database;
- **Cultural Trips**: Designed to reintroduce adoptees to their heritage, these curated journeys incorporate visits to culturally and historically significant sites in Ethiopia. These experiences are personalized and often directly related to the adoptee's family story and regional origins;

- **Hosting and Support**: in this service, Emaye offers suitable lodging to reflect the adoptee's comfort and cultural expectation. These accommodations are culturally considerate and designed to foster comfort and a sense of belonging during the often-emotional reunion process.

- **Events and Other Services**: The organization hosts various community-building events, storytelling workshops, and cultural exchange sessions, allowing adoptees, biological families, and adoptive families to share their experiences and support one another. These services also include information sessions and counseling referrals to assist with emotional processing.

  Social Media Pages and Webpage of the Emaye Adoptees Organization

The Instagram page of Emaye Adoptees Organization, @emaye_adopteeshome, by the time this research was conducted has 521 followers. As described by the key informant, the Instagram page is considered to be safest and secure platform to contact with the adoptees. The organization has wide reach on social media. Through the platforms they have set up, they have been able to find many adoptees, and they are still looking for and providing support in reunification and various services. They organize a big program on the calls and invitations they post on their social media. In that case, adoptees from all over the world come to the Addis Ababa headquarters to exchange ideas, connect with those who haven't met, and those who haven't met ask the organization to help them.

The overall mission of Emaye Adoptees Family Reunion Organization is to provide a safe and nurturing space for adoptees, adoptive families, and biological families to reunite, share their stories, and build meaningful connections. Through the guesthouse and charity initiatives, the organization aims to offer emotional, financial, and logistical support to those who are seeking family bonds while promoting awareness and understanding of adoption's unique challenges and joy. The researcher chose Emaye Organization for four main reasons. The first one is that it is one of the few Post Adoption Reunion Organizations that has visibility; the second is they are found to be very present on social media and close to information; third is their efforts on reuniting lost adoptees with families by using major media outlets like EBS is admirable; and lastly it has been found to have international exposure by working with organizations and creating connections with adoptees who reside in different countries.

The selection of Emaye as the focal point of this research is both strategic and purposeful. The organization's direct involvement with post-adoption reunions offers a rich, context-specific environment for examining the reunion process from multiple perspectives, including those of adoptees, social workers, cultural liaisons, and birth families. Furthermore, the organization's partnership with key stakeholders such as the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which provides monitoring and support to the organization in certain ways in terms of consular, travel services and the issue of women and children and the Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia where the French Embassy in Addis Ababa donated money to the organization for the support of adoptees in support of reunion. It enhances its credibility and relevance within the local and international adoption communities.

By focusing on this particular setting, the study gains access to a wealth of first-hand experiences and insights related to the sociocultural, emotional, and logistical dimensions of post-adoption reunions in the Ethiopian context. Additionally, it allows for a nuanced examination of how institutional support, cultural reconnection, and individual agency intersect in shaping the outcomes of adoption reunions.

3.3. Participants

By giving the description to Emaye Organization about this research's purpose, they were able to contact both adoptees who reunited and are seeking to reunite with their birth family from where they reside to share their experience and journey of post adoption reunion to the researcher.

- Adoptees: those who had either successfully reunited with their biological family or those who were seeking actively to reunite with their birth family;
- Key informants: who are associated with the organization, including staff members and social workers with first-hand knowledge about institutional practices, common challenges.

The selection of these participants was informed by their direct involvement in or deep insight into the post-adoption reunion experience and journey. The adoptees offered rich, firsthand narratives of their emotional and logistical journeys, while key informants provided contextual knowledge about institutional practices, common challenges, and the broader sociocultural landscape.

Due to geographic constraints and the international dispersion of adoptees, all interviews and discussions were conducted remotely via Zoom meeting and WhatsApp. This approach ensured accessibility while maintaining a personal and respectful atmosphere for participants to share sensitive and emotionally charged experiences. When some participants couldn't speak English and only French, translation was supported by those who could speak the language.

The inclusion of both reunited and pre-reunion adoptees provided a valuable contrast of perspectives, enabling the study to examine the full spectrum of the reunion journey—from hope and anticipation to reflection and re-integration. The diverse range of participant experiences

contributed significantly to the richness of the qualitative data and allowed for the emergence of multi-dimensional themes during the data analysis phase.

3.4. Sampling technique

The researcher used non probability sampling technique as it allows for quick and convenient data to be collected especially when trying to reach from far away. In that way, basic information could be provided and the objective of the study can be achieved. There are different methods in non-probability sampling and this includes Quota sampling, Convenience, Snowball, and Purposive sampling method. The researcher chose to use Purposive sampling method in the view of the fact that it helped answer research questions and mainly gather in-depth information and data richness from a specific group of participants (Palinkas et al, 2015). Despite the advantages that purposive sampling technique provides, it has also its own flaws that might introduce biases. A scholar has mentioned in his research about the benefits and drawbacks of purposive sampling technique (Andrade, 2021).

Pros

It has a feature of Homogeneity: it studies on population that is only specific to the interest which in this case is Post adoption reunion and a great advantage to reach out to people who live in remote area.

It is cost-efficient: it saves money and time by targeting only the ones who are relevant for this study.

It is important for specific research: as for this thesis has been going for, it would be called perfect for qualitative research where the goal is depth rather than breadth.

Cons

It has a feature of limited transferability: the findings do not fully represent the broader population considering that the sample is not randomly selected.

It is very difficult to find participants: the researcher was challenged to find qualified participants who meets the specific criteria and meets the objectives for this study.

3.5. Methods of Data collecting

For this research thesis, both primary and secondary data were employed;

Primary Data Collection: the primary data was gathered through:

- Semi-structured in-depth interviews: with key informants and adoptees;
- Focus group discussions (FGDs): conducted virtually via zoom and WhatsApp video calls with adoptees at various stages of their journey;

These tools enabled the researcher to capture detailed personal experiences, emotional insights, and collective reflections on the reunion process. The virtual format facilitated participation from geographically dispersed individuals while maintaining the integrity and depth of the data.

Secondary Data Collection: to complement and contextualize the primary findings, relevant secondary sources were reviewed. These included:

- Academic books and peer-reviewed journal articles on adoption and post adoption-dynamics;
- Official and unofficial documents from the organizations' Adoptees' Family Organization and other relevant institutions;
- Documentary videos from Emaye Adoptees' Family Organization about post adoption reunion are also used as a source of information.

All these together, these sources provided valuable background information, policy context, and theoretical grounding for interpreting primary data.

3.6. Data analysis

The researcher has used Qualitative Data analysis. Qualitative data analysis in this study involved a systematic process of organizing, coding, and interpreting narrative material to uncover both explicit and implicit meanings. It is fundamentally an interpretive endeavor aimed at making sense of complex, non-numerical data—particularly the lived experiences of individuals and groups. As Flick (2009) notes, one of the primary goals of qualitative analysis is to describe phenomena in rich detail, often through the lens of individual and collective

meaning-making. In the context of this research, the phenomenon under study is the post-adoption reunion experience of Ethiopian adoptees and their biological families.

The different qualitative data analysis include; Content, Narrative, Discourse, Grounded, and Thematic analysis. For this specific study, two complementary approaches were employed:

- **Narrative analysis:** This method focuses on how participants construct and share their personal stories. It is especially useful for understanding identity, transformation, and emotional dynamics over time. Narrative analysis allowed the researcher to interpret how adoptees frame their journeys of separation, search, and reunion. Narrative analysis explores personal stories and identity reconstruction (Riessman, 2008).
- **Thematic analysis**: This approach was used to identify recurring patterns, ideas, and most importantly to identify factors that facilitate a successful reunion (Joffe & Yardley, 2008). Themes were derived inductively from the data and were used to structure the findings, providing insight into shared challenges, expectations, and coping strategies.

3.7. Ethical Code of Conduct

The Ethical Consideration that the researcher has taken were respecting each individual's privacy and security as to benefit the importance of this research. It was discussed that ethical consideration safeguards participants' dignity and emotional wellbeing (Orb et al, 2001). Ethical Standards were central to the design and execution of this study. Here are some of the major ethical considerations that the researcher has taken in to consideration briefly below;

- **Informed Consent**: Each participant was fully informed about the nature, objectives, procedures, and potential risks of the study. Participation was voluntary, and individuals were given the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty or consequence;
- **Respect for the participants**: The researcher maintained a respectful and non-judgmental stance at all times. Participants' autonomy, emotional well-being, and cultural values were carefully respected. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in a manner that encouraged trust, openness, and psychological safety;
- **Confidentiality and Autonomy**: All personal information and data were treated with strict confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used in data presentation, and identifiable details were omitted or altered to protect participant privacy;

- **Transparency:** The researcher was transparent about the goals, limitations, and potential uses of the study. This helped establish mutual trust between the researcher and participants and contributed to the credibility of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents and interprets the qualitative data collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with the adoptees as communicated from the Emaye Organization and key informants. Drawing on narrative and thematic approaches (Creswell, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), the analysis proceeds in three steps:

- Narrative Overviews for each adoptee, highlighting their unique reunion trajectories.
- Thematic Analysis to identify cross- cutting patterns.
- Synthesis & Reflection on how these findings address the study's core objectives.

This research followed strict ethical conducts in respecting the privacy of respondents and hence, quotations are by respondent pseudonym and all transcript excerpts refer to the file Interviewee.

Chapter Three (Section 3.1) described the qualitative design— Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with adoptees and In-Depth Interview (IDI) with the organization's staff and affiliated professionals. The organization is staffed with important and necessary professionals that deal with the needs of the individual adoptee. These include: Psychotherapists – occupied with helping adoptees on emotional, social, and mental stability issues and create a sense of resilience; Legal advisors who deal with specific procedures when conducting the post adoption reunion; and social anthropologists who are well equipped to assist the adoptee in finding their families and accustom the adoptee to the cultures of their family.

Hence, the research has conducted thorough investigation of the proceedings of how adoptees of Ethiopian origin and living abroad get to start the journey of finding their birth families and examine the structural, organizational, social, and emotional challenges faced by adoptees. However, the researcher has made important to note that the individual experiences of the adoptees is not to be used to make general conclusions and draw a "one size fits for all" recommendation. Rather, this research emphasizes on the repetitive patterns and trends in order to answer the research questions as listed in chapter one through the use of narrative analysis, which is important to preserve individual stories (Riessman, 2008) and thematic analysis, which is essential to identify shared patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In this regard, to enable the researcher sort out the important patterns, the data collected through Focus Group Discussions are classified into two distinct groups: Focus Group-One is assembled

to discuss with adoptees who are successfully reunited with their birth families and Focus Group-Two are organized to discuss with adoptees that are in the process of their post adoption reunion. In addition to focus group discussions and the groups classified to study their patterns, key informant interviews with the organization's staff, which include directors and social workers, and representatives from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Affairs (MoWCYA) are conducted to enrich the content of the research's objectives.

In support of the above, thematic presentation of the findings, are built on the narratives described with four main themes that emerged across participants. These are: Access and referral pathways, language and communication dynamics, organizational support and protocols, and lastly, challenges and emotional trajectories. For each theme, subthemes are introduced, supported by representative quotations, and linked to both the research objectives and existing literature.

All interviews were conducted in English or French (with translation support when required) between January and April 2025. Translations where necessary followed standard back-translation procedures (Brislin, 1970) to ensure fidelity.

By respecting the ethical code, Quotations are coded by respondent pseudonym in a tabular form and all transcript excerpts refer to the file Interviewee.

4.1. Introduction

4.2.Thematic Presentation of findings

The four main themes emerged across participants are formed in the following below:

1. Access & Referral Pathways
2. Language & Communication Dynamics
3. Organizational Support & Protocols
4. Challenges & Emotional Trajectories

These four themes are related to the research questions that were presented in the first chapter. The first theme was about investigating the challenges in which Emaye Organization deals with finding adoptees' file and the alternative solutions that it takes; the second theme is about the

language barriers that could be described by Adoptees during post adoption reunion and how significant social medias are for communication mechanism; the third is about understanding the kinds of services and opportunities that Emaye Organization provides for both adoptees who have successfully reunited with their birth family and those seeking to reunite with their birth family; the last theme is about the psychological support that Emaye provides for adoptees when it comes to emotional complexities and dealing with inaccurate (incomplete) documentation. For each theme, subthemes are introduced, supported by representative quotations, and linked to both the research objectives and existing literature.

4.3. Focus Group Discussion

4.3.1. Focus Group – One

The first focus group are adoptees who successfully reunited with their birth family despite facing different internal and external issues. Although the adoptees in this section of the focus group discussions have all been reunited with their families, they have had different experiences individually. The members of this discussion are 6 in number and have had their search beginning from 2020 – 2024. In these years, there are those who have found their birth families in a few months' time, approximately 1 month, and in the contrary, there are those who were only successfully reunited after 2 years and 7 months later. They have all shared the experiences in the search, wait and success in meeting their families and the following entails the patterns of their recorded testimonials.

4.3.1.1. Background and Referrals

The first focus group have shared their backstory of how they successfully reunited with their birth family through the Emaye organization by contacting the directors through different social media platform.

In the group discussion, Pseudonym 1 had shared the history of how the adoptee discovered the reunion organization. the adoptee also was adopted as an infant and now currently residing in France, one of the adoptees who was successfully reunited with his Ethiopian birth family in mid- 2022, shared that the journey to find his birth family started with a click on the organization's Facebook page. The adoptee mentioned that he initially discovered the Emaye Organization via a Facebook post and validated its legitimacy by speaking with a co- worker

already engaged in organization's office. Social media as an avenue for transnational reunion is well documented.

Pseudonym 1 Gender = male Age = 20's	**Time of the reunion:** "*I am currently residing in France and it has been three years since I successfully reunited with my family."*
	Opportunities that Emaye has offered: "*the Emaye Adoptee Organization is a safe place to gather and helps other adoptees building on self-confidence. The opportunities that the organization had offered to me, the person who put me in contact to talk to my birth family was co-worker in Emaye Adoptees Organization who at that time was in the North and it is where my birth family is. Therefore, the opportunities the organization offered was sending someone who is trustful and can translate what the birth families were saying."*
	Language Barrier: "*language was not a barrier because I had someone with me for the translation."*
	Challenges that can be described: *"I feel*

	like I am the luckiest person of not dealing any challenge to find my birth family". **Action that was taken**: "*The first attempt to find my birth family was meeting the founder of Emaye Organization. I had a wonderful conversation with him and Mr. Biruk showed me the plan and goal of Emaye Adoptees Organization and with the help of professionals, it didn't take me too long to reunite with his family."*

Table 1: Pseudonym 1's Post Adoption Reunion Experience

Pseudonym 2 who has had a successful reunion mentioned that the adoptee was adopted in 2003, and reunited with the birth family in late 2022. This was made possible due to the connections built with other French-based adoptees who had known about the organization and its works.

Pseudonym 2 Gender= Female Age = 20's	**Time of reunion**: *"I was adopted in 2003 and successfully reunited with my birth family in 2022."*
	Opportunities that Emaye has offered: *"the opportunities that the organization offered was building networks, making contacts, people who could translate what others were talking about in which helped me better understand my birth family."*

	Language Barrier: "*Language was barrier but it was handled by the directors of the organization and also other adoptees for the communication. If needed to contact with my birth family, I sometimes use pictures to understand each other. But the one challenge that I've faced was with my birth family members. I sometimes text to my cousins via telegram. It was too much for my family when I wanted to discuss about my story or the questions that I had raised."*
	Challenges that can be described: "*the challenge that I faced at the time was around 2020 or 2021, there was an internal conflict in Ethiopia and this made it impossible for me to arrive to Ethiopia. After that time has passed, my second attempt was successful after I met Rebecca and Biruk."* **Actions that were taken:** "*before I was introduced to Emaye Organization, I went to the association where I was adopted from my family and tried to organize group of adoptees to find their birth family by traveling to Ethiopia."*

Table 2: Pseudonym 2's Post Adoption Reunion Experience

Pseudonym 3 was adopted as an infant and currently living in Paris, an adoptee within this focus group discussion was reconnected with his aunt and extended kin in Addis Ababa in November 2021. It came to be upon, first, visiting Emaye's website, scheduled a preparatory meeting with his French adoption association, and then arranged a Facebook message to a close friend of the birth relatives using digital networks to triangulate biological kinship aligns with patterns in prior literature.

Pseudonym 3 Gender= male Age = 20's	**Time of Reunion*:*** *"I am now currently residing in Paris and I successfully reunited with my birth family on November 2021, which is four years ago."*
	Language Barrier: "my *aunt doesn't speak English but other family members can speak fluently. So, there is no problem, it is going well."* **Challenges that can be described***: "I didn't deal any challenges. It was very easy to find his family". The only challenge I've dealt was between 6th of October to 31st of November 2021 because the moment I sent a message to his aunt's friend, I was expecting an answer and the moment I felt "emotional" and "nervous", but after that it was very quick."* **Action that was taken*:*** *"I called an adoption*

	organization in France and requested an appointment to have his documents prepared on October 6, 2021. After I took my documents, I tried to reach my aunt through Facebook by contacting her friends. After one month with several attempts, I finally reached the closest friend to her and was able to reach his aunt. I came to Addis Ababa and I felt like I was at home and found my aunt along with his other family members."

Table 3: Pseudonym 3's Post Adoption Reunion Experience

The pattern of the background of how the reunion with birth families done by Emaye adoptee organization, hence, is through social media, through connections and networks, and through visiting the website arranged by the organization. One other important pattern is also the fact that the organization is more popular among adoptees in France, making the outreach concentrated in the European country.

4.3.1.2. Reunion Process

What the researcher understood after interviewing both the adoptees who successfully reunited with their birth family and key informants from Emaye Organization is that the reunion process begins from the adoptees' decision to seek their family. There are multiple reasons to why they want to reunite with their birth family and it includes the desire to understand their origins- this usually happens from the mistreatment they get from where they reside, build a sense of identity, and a chance of making new connections, but most importantly, the reason why they want to reconnect is because they believe that they were victim of adoption and they want to reconnect for their health and to have resilience. Then, when adoptees contact the organization, the organization respects their decision sets up a team of professionals to find their birth family after reviewing the files of each adoptee and make a long-term reunification possible.

Emaye Organization asks the adoptees different questions before the reunion process begins. For instance, the organization does ask about their reason for the adoption in the view of the fact that understanding these issues helps them make sense of their history and without these important knowledges, they would experience confusion, insecurity or having a sense of "incomplete". Unfortunately, according to the key informant, most of them don't know the truth behind their adoption, they only know what's written on their adoption documents. The other question that they include is if they remember anything from their childhood and some adoptees give a picture of their family member to the organization, which would make it convenient on the quest of origin. For instance, an adoptee, who was born in Addis Ababa and adopted at the age of 18 months, contacted the organization to find and reunite with two half-brothers who reside in Ethiopia. The reason why this person was looking for reunification is because the adoptee said "I'm lost and I am looking for my identity, I miss a part of me". For the reunion process, the adoptee shared the photos including their names and surnames to the organization. Emaye Organization also have a history of dealing with Adoptees who are married and have children; the adoptees want to explain about their lineage and most of the time, the documents have been falsified and the adoptees would feel insecure to lie to their kids when their stories aren't correct. The post adoption reunion is not only a way for the adoptees to heal but also to be able to tell a story because being able to tell a story is emotionally hard for them. Therefore, most of the adoptees want their children to be aware about their real origin and their culture because they themselves have suffered racism by the society. The organization provides a psychological help for the adoptees.

From the first group, an adoptee has mentioned the organization arranged for a translator (fluent in Amharic and French) to accompany him to meet his biological relatives in Tigray. Despite the backdrop of post- conflict tensions in northern Ethiopia, the adoptee reported no significant logistical barriers— "I feel like I am the luckiest person not dealing any challenge to find my birth family".

Pseudonym 3 from the first focus group noted minor language barriers (his aunt did not speak English, but other relatives did), which were mediated by family members and Emaye organization volunteers. The adoptee has also reported high anxiety during the month- long waiting period (October 6 – November 6, 2021), describing it as "nervousness" that subsided

only after face- to- face contact. Anxious anticipation is a common emotional response documented in reunion research (Mitchell &Kuczynski, 2010).

For the search, the organization does not charge the adoptees since it has a financial support from French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and French Embassy in Addis Ababa but for the trip across the country, the adoptees will pay.

4.3.1.3. Organizational Support

A critical determinant in the success of post-adoption reunions lies in the quality and scope of support provided by the facilitating organization. In the context of the Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization, organizational support emerges as a central axis around which both emotional and logistical aspects of the reunion experience revolve. The organization's multifaceted approach plays a pivotal role not only in orchestrating the reunion itself but also in fostering adoptees' psychosocial adjustment, self-confidence, and long-term relational development with their birth families and communities.

The Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization implements a holistic framework of support, operationalized through its four-pillar model: reconnection, cultural immersion, ongoing hosting, and community events. Each of these pillars is designed to address the complex and layered needs of adoptees returning to their birth culture, often after many years of separation and cultural displacement. The adoptees usually stay in the emaye organization from three weeks to one month. Within those times they do many activities to which the organization provides, help them to understand the custom and lifestyle, and helping them exchange a good relationship with other adoptees.

Reconnection efforts are facilitated through structured introductions to birth families, with staff playing an essential mediatory role. These initial contacts are sensitively managed to minimize emotional strain and maximize the potential for meaningful relational bonds. Cultural immersion is addressed through comprehensive orientation workshops that educate adoptees on Ethiopian language, customs, social norms, and historical contexts. These workshops not only serve to bridge the cultural gap but also act as confidence-building mechanisms, empowering adoptees to engage more authentically with their heritage.

Simultaneous translation services are another critical component, ensuring clear communication between adoptees and their birth families—many of whom may speak only local languages. These services help to reduce misunderstandings and enhance the emotional depth of interactions. The ongoing hosting initiative provides continued logistical and emotional support throughout the adoptees' stay in Ethiopia, offering a structured yet flexible environment conducive to reflection and adaptation.

Lastly, community events introduce adoptees to wider networks of local residents, fellow returnees, and cultural practitioners. These gatherings function as social incubators, allowing adoptees to establish connections that extend beyond their nuclear birth families and into the broader cultural milieu.

By offering this integrated support system, the Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization not only enhances the immediate outcomes of post-adoption reunions but also lays a sustainable foundation for adoptees' long-term reconnection with their cultural identities. The organization's intentional settings of these experiences directly address many of the psychological and practical challenges identified in post-adoption reunion literature, underscoring its role as a key facilitator in the adoptee's journey toward reintegration and identity formation.

4.3.1.4. External Barriers

From the discussion with the adoptees that have successfully reunited with their birth family, most of them have described that there weren't any external challenges when making a reunification, called it even "convenient" however, one has shared the external challenge. The adoptee mentioned the initial attempt to travel in 2020–2021 but was prevented by the Tigray conflict (Young, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2021). After the situation stabilized, Emaye staff successfully coordinated the adoptee's 2022 visit. The researcher has learned that the occurrence of external factors for instance political instability is what delays or complicate the post adoption reunion.

4.3.1.5. Emotional and Psychological Trajectory

In the first focus group, adoptees have reported anxiety before meeting biological kin (Langrehr, 2013; Siegel, 2015) describing a pre-reunion anxiety, one described a relatively smooth emotional transition and reported minimal emotional hurdles, attributing it to preparatory sessions with the organization's psychotherapist.

"I feel like I am the luckiest person not dealing any challenge to find my birth family.".

In this context**,** individual differences in coping with reunion stress are well documented (Siegel, 2015; Langrehr, 2013). Factors such as pre-existing mental health, family support, and prior counseling likely shape these divergent trajectories.

4.3.1.6. Challenges in the process

From the zoom meeting interview, the researcher has learned that the main challenge that the adoptees have faced during the reunion process was the language barriers because the adoptees have been raised in Europe, however the organization has a team that helps the adoptees reconnect them when there are difficulties to these kinds of situations.

Upon arrival, Pseudonym 2 from the first Focus group mentioned the limited Amharic necessitated reliance on the organization in providing translators and peer adoptee volunteers. It was noted:

> "We sometimes used pictures or Telegram to communicate—my cousins found texting confusing". Nonverbal strategies in cross- cultural reunions are consistent with prior findings (Roberts, 2017; Sinclair, 2012).

Indications

Every reunited adoptee credited Emaye's translator network—fluent in Amharic, English, French, and occasionally regional dialects—for enabling coherent communication. It was mentioned by the adoptees from the first focus group in a tabular form:

"Language was not a barrier because I had someone with me for translation".

"The directors and other adoptees helped me communicate; sometimes we used pictures or Telegram when needed".

Hence, the researcher was able to understand from the interview that translation support is essential in cross-linguistic reunions (Roberts, 2017; Sinclair, 2012). It prevents misunderstandings that could disrupt the delicate emotional process of reunion (Siegel, 2015). The key informant in an interview explained that beyond the language barrier, adoptees during post adoption reunion face other challenges. This includes adapting to different cultures, lifestyles, social life, etc. Emaye Organization was established for both birth families and adoptees to encourage open mentalities and make the birth family understand the condition of their biological child. Therefore, the other big challenge that the organization face as explained by the key informant is some birth mothers assume that their child would come back and live with them eternally. Making them understand that it is not possible is difficult.

4.3.1.7. Analyzing the process of reunification

The organization is an adoptees organization that works on reunification and it was founded to be a place where the adoptees have a choice to come or not to come. They could also bring their adoptive parents and sometimes it is good to work with them to accept the adoptees' decision, to get back to their root, the culture to understand, and start searching of their family. So, the association is a place to discuss these kinds of issues. The organization helps the adoptive parents to accept these decisions of the adoptees.

The adoptee can't have a good reconnection if he/she knows the adoptive parents are not comfortable about it, then it would divide his/her family and it will be hard for the adoptees to handle. The key informant from the first focus group explained that:

> "After working with the adoptive parents, we contact the natural family, get prepared and talk to them, we have to explain to them about the purpose of this reconnection. From an experience, most of the natural family are not aware that an adoptee can come back. The only person that knows is the birth mother because she is the one waiting for her child to come back".

There are different things the organization does to accomplish a successful post adoption reunion. The first thing the organization does is to have a conversation about the cultural difference about the situation to the birth family where the adoptee has been living so that they could understand that there was a trauma, problematics that the adoptee has went through and explain why both the adoptee and the birth family need to reconnect. The trauma of abandonment is for both the adoptee and the birth mother. By knowing the process, it could bring a resilience when both adoptee and birth family decides to change and, in that way, it creates a new life.

4.3.1.7.1. Organizational focus and purpose of reunion

The purpose of post adoption reunion in Emaye Organization according to the key informant is to provide reunification and to do a host, which refers to providing a space for contact, it may include physical or virtual, for the reunion to be occurred between the adopted individuals and the birth family members. The organization mainly focuses on protecting the adoptees from scammers since they couldn't speak their original language very well and to protect them from different barriers to make sure that the adoptees would feel home when they arrive to the reunion organization. After a successful reunion with birth families, most of the time the organization keeps in touch with the adoptees who have successfully reunited with their birth family. They regularly check on them if there's any updates and how they are doing with their birth family.

4.3.1.7.2. Opportunities acquired from Post Adoption Reunion

The opportunities that the organization have acquired from post adoption reunion as mentioned by the key informant helped them creating connections and build on networks; benefited to work with other international NGOs and embassies; and finally, has given the opportunity to do research and understand the issues and gaps regarding the adoption system in Ethiopia. For instance, legal issues surrounding the adoption, the existence of child trafficking and so many other researches were done in the view of the fact that all these issues affected the reunification process and had raised many questions since the result of the study and the evident practice didn't match.

In an interview, the key informant mentioned that one of the researches that the organization done was studying about the "systemic child trafficking" and it focused on the adoption system concerned by stakeholders actively working in this particular issue such as the Orphanage, Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs (currently called Ministry of Women and Social Affairs), and lastly in the system, it gets finalized in the court. The beginning of this process starts from a child being provided by an orphanage, the orphanage then collects children from the police station and other places and distributes them to various orphanage organizations. The orphanage, through the association, finds people to adopt the children, completes the adoption process, and finally the court approves.

Throughout this process, the key informant said that main problem in the court approval system is that "the court does not make a decision without fully investigating the case". There are documents, paper works, and other things that needs to be completed before a verdict could be issued, but all of this were being passed without being completed. Another issue is that a data inconsistency occurs in a file where for instance, on one filed document clarifies about the birth parents being poor on the other pages, it mentions that the child is an orphan and has been living in the streets. Before a court decides that a child should be given up for an adoption, it must first inquire and investigate if a child is really an orphan or not by bringing evidence and testimony. However, due to the documents not being connected, decisions tend to get passed.

The key informant explained about social study being conducted, it is a system when a child gets adopted, family form gets signed first and, in the description, it lists the personal information, birth families name and address, and the reason why a child needed to get adopted.

Unfortunately, most of the children's family form only lists the adoptees' name and the background of birth family doesn't get written correctly and according to the key informant, most of the adoption agencies keep this basic information for themselves. In general, different problems like these makes it difficult for a successful reunion. Only few organizations in Ethiopia work in post adoption reunion.

4.3.1.7.3. Social Reconnections and the role of DNA

Based on the case study example that was put above, the researcher has asked in an interview with the key informant from Emaye Organization and mentions that DNA tests during the finding of birth families have a major role for a successful post adoption reunion for the reason that to avoid falsified information. And it is needed when the documents about the history of an adoptee's birth family could not be found and this may take a while when going through Administrative and Field Search.

In an interview the key informant said:

> "In terms of time, it could take for over four years of search of the biological family. There are different types of searches and it includes Administrative Search and Field Search. The field search is very important because sometimes when the specification of document gets so big, the organization goes back to the field. When the organizations' team gets a reference of the birth family, they go from administration to administration for instance: from police stations to orphanage centers. The organization has also a team on the field that goes door to door search, which is a very long search. This field search is done if the documents of the birth family (adoptees' history) disappeared".

The key informant mentions that "falsification is way worse than a file getting lost" for the reason that it creates emotional distress and hinders the ability to connect with birth families. To reduce this issue, DNA tests comes into play if only the adoptee is willing and helps to provide concrete evidence; it could prevent fraud and ensure that adopted individuals have the chance to reconnect with their birth family, beyond that from emotional trajectory standpoint; it could also have a profound impact on an adoptee's emotional well-being, helps them understand their identity and the history of their family.

4.3.1.7.4. Benefits of Reunification

There are many benefits of a successful reunification. The researcher has asked both the adoptees and the key informants and both have shared the importance. From what have been described by the focus group, it was mentioned that the question of their identity being answered after years of questioning who they really were. From the key informant's perspective since the organization prepare a support for a psychological journey, it helps the adoptees build on self-confidence especially those suffering traumata of abandonment.

Those who have suffered this type of early trauma have not been able to develop to rapidly adapt. The key informant mentioned "the trauma of abandonment for the adoptees have created chronic depression that damages the self-esteem and everything in life is connected to this trauma". therefore, the researcher understood the psychological support that the organization provides for the adoptees and sometimes alongside with their adoptive parents is what makes the reunification with the birth family stronger.

4.3.1.7.5. The organization limitation in terms of location

The key informant from Emaye Organization mentioned that the organization has a partner organization at France. In terms of location, while the partner organization at France works on Ethiopian adoptees mainly who reside in Europe for instance, Belgium, Spain, Sweden very often etc. Emaye Organization in Addis Ababa receives Ethiopian adoptees from all parts of the world. The key informant noted that the organization in Addis Ababa (where the headquarter is) have received and worked on adoptees from America, Australia, Cameroon, France and so on.

4.3.2. Focus Group Two

The second focus group are adoptees seeking to reunite with their birth family. In this second group, it was shared to the researcher about the intention behind the seeking of reunification and it is due to the prejudice from people and false documents about their history that the adoptees have received. Hence, the negative treatment and limited information is what pushed the adoptees to understand about their origin. Based on this thesis, most of the adoptees have these kinds of questions that they want an answer.

Pseudonym A, Gender = Male Age = 20's	**His introduction to Emaye Organization**: *I went to the adoption organization in Belgium called "Child's Mild" but the issue was they couldn't give me any information about his birth family. A year and a half ago, I discovered the Emaye organization through Facebook and met the founder and co-founder, then having a long conversation, I came to Ethiopia after 27 years and found out more information than the association I went before. I asked f if there are any trustful association and due to having small conversation, that is how I discovered Emaye. Emaye's target (philosophy) is questing for origin, which was one of the reasons what I was looking for.*
	Opportunities that Emaye has Offered: *Building networks, and making contacts were the major opportunities but also the directors putting a lot of effort in finding my files.* **First Quest:** *The first intention was questing his origin than finding my biological family. When I was in Ethiopia with the directors, he found out that there were a lot of mistakes with my files and that is when I started to ask himself and wanted to look for his original family.* **Challenges that could be described**: *When he went back to Ethiopia, he felt a lot of challenges, I was asked by other organizations if I could speak Amharic based on my looks and when I was in France, I was judged by his color.*

Table 4: Pseudonym A's seeking for post adoption reunion

Organizational Role: Emaye Adoptees' Family Reunion is an organization that plays a pivotal role in helping adoptees and birth families navigate the complexities of searching, connecting, and establishing relationship after reunion. Part of the organization's duty is to access the adoptees' record and documents. After the adoptee came to Emaye organization. the organization's staff reviewed the adoptee's adoption files, identified inconsistencies, and connected the adoptee with local authorities in Addis Ababa. Despite these efforts, as of April 2025 the adoptee has not identified his biological family.

Societal Challenges: an adoptee described dual- cultural prejudice: "In France, I was judged by my color; in Ethiopia, they doubted my Amharic ability". Such identity conflicts are well documented among transnational adoptees (Hoksbergen & van Hezewijk, 2014; Park, 2016). The researcher has learned from key informant that this does affect the self-confidence of the adoptee and that is why the adoptee needed support from the organization when these kinds of challenges happen.

Pseudonym B is another adoptee who is seeking to reunite with the birth family shared a story of the adoption. The person was adopted through the association called *Les Reines Mesericorde* when the adoptee was only four years old.

Pseudonym B, Gender = Female Age = 29	*"I was adopted through the association Les Reines de Mésericorde when I was around 4 years old, in 2000. From what I've been told, my mother died of tuberculosis and was left to die at the nuns' home, and my father was simply told that he had passed away. I have a videotape of my time at the orphanage. I would so much like to find family and especially my origins, to no longer have this lack of identity. I never really felt like I belonged in my adoptive family. I always had this emptiness, this missing half. When I see Ethiopian families, I always wonder why me? Who do I look like? I would like to understand my language? I would like to live with my origins".*

Table 5: Pseudonym B's seeking for Post Adoption Reunion

Pseudonym C is another adoptee who mentioned that the reason why she contacted the Emaye Organization was because she was told that the organization could help adoptees find their birth families.

Pseudonym C, Gender = Female Age = 20's	*"I contacted Emaye Organization because I was told that the organization could help adoptees find their birth families. I was adopted alongside with my two sisters. On the day of adoption, we were separated from our older sister, who stayed in Ethiopia. We had a difficult time for the three of us even to this day. We have tried to look for her for over eight years but still couldn't find her. The only thing I have is a photo of her".*

Table 6: Pseudonym C's seeking for Post Adoption Reunion

4.3.2.1. Societal Stigma and Struggles

From Focus group two recounted racial prejudice in France and suspicion about his Amharic skills in Ethiopia. the only major emotional barrier faced by an adoptee from the second focus group was intense "nervousness" while awaiting initial contact.

"When I went back to Ethiopia, I faced challenges from society: they asked if I could speak Amharic, judging me by my looks.".

From what could be understood is that dual-cultural stigma—racialized othering in Europe and language- based suspicion in Ethiopia—corrodes adoptees' sense of belonging (Hoksbergen & van Hezewijk, 2014; Park, 2016). Such findings echo global accounts of transracial adoptees' identity negotiation (Helstein, 2018).

4.3.2.2 Role of Documentation for Process of Reunification

Documentation is considered to be very important in providing information and plays a major role in post adoption reunion. Therefore, it helps facilitate for searching birth family members, understand the origin of the birth family and navigate the emotional complexities. However; in a

discussion with the second focus group, it was mentioned that the major challenge before entering Emaye Organization was finding the right documentation. Before making connection with the organization, the adoptee faced misinformation from a Belgian agency ("Child's Mild") that supplied inaccurate documents.

"I felt betrayed by the French Association; they provided wrong documents and no leads." Said an adoptee from focus group two.

Based on what has been described from focus group two, different scholars mention that institutional mismanagement are recurring barriers in transnational reunion (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). And for that reason, the organization's emergence fills critical gaps left by inadequate adoption systems.

4.3.3. Access and Referral Pathways

4.3.3.1. Digital Networks

All adoptees from Focus group one who ultimately reunited and the second focus group still seeking cited social media—particularly Facebook—as the primary initial contact point. Zoom calls prior to travel helped establish trust.

From what the researcher has understood from both focus groups, it is that digital platforms are not only avenues for locating diaspora adoptees but also for preliminary trust- building (Fennig & Goldson, 2019). However, according to other scholars, the digital platforms also carry inherent risks of misinformation especially on to vulnerable adoptees who might encounter scammers presenting themselves as relatives (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). These kinds of misinformation could be used to gain emotional leverage or take an advantage in finance, especially in emotionally charged efforts.

Another factor that the key informant has explained about the negative impact of digital platform on vulnerable adoptees is that some adoptees reject to reunite their biological family due to the false information they have received. This happens when they were first told that their birth parents passed way but suddenly a birth family member contacts the adoptee and telling them that their birth parents are still alive. For instance, a thirty-year-old adoptee woman was being searched by her birth mother for a very long time and someone told the birth mother that her daughter was found through Facebook. The birth mother was very happy and wanted to contact

her biological daughter. However, it did not go as planned after contacting her biological daughter because the adoptee was told before that her biological mother died and could not believe what her biological mother was talking about. Despite being told that her birth mother was alive and had psychological problems, the adoptee woman was instable and didn't want to contact her. Until currently as this research being conducted, Emaye Organization is still trying to reconnect the daughter with her biological mother.

Local and International broadcasting media, EBS and reunions

Ethiopian Broadcasting Service (EBS TV), established in 2008 in USA, has emerged as a pioneering force in Ethiopian diaspora media. As a privately owned broadcasting entity, EBS TV has carved a niche for itself by delivering culturally resonant and socially impactful programming to a rapidly growing audience base both within Ethiopia and across the global Ethiopian diaspora. From its inception, EBS TV has preserved a reputation as an innovative, entrepreneurial, and forward-thinking broadcaster, committed to bridging geographical and generational divides through its diverse array of programming.

With a viewership exceeding 30 million globally, EBS TV curates' content that reflects Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage while also responding to contemporary issues facing Ethiopians at home and abroad. The station's programming spans various genres—including history, lifestyle, sports, entertainment, tourism, and business—designed to foster a sense of identity, pride, and connection among Ethiopians worldwide.

One of the channel's most impactful offerings is the flagship program *"Kidamen Kesat"* (translated as *"Saturday Afternoon"*), which blends entertainment with deeply human stories that engage audiences emotionally and intellectually. Within this program are special segments such as *"Beteseb Filega"* and *"Beteseb Megenagnet"*, which focus on family tracing and reunification, especially among those separated by adoption, migration, or economic hardship. These segments reflect a growing public interest in identity, origin, and familial ties, themes that resonate deeply with both domestic and diaspora audiences.

A particularly case aired on March 5, 2022, highlights the program's social significance. In this episode, a young Ethiopian adoptee named Girma—raised in Holland after being adopted

through the Norwegian Adoption Agency—returned to Ethiopia in search of his birth mother after twenty-eight years. The backstory begins in 1995 G.C., when Girma's mother, facing dire socio-economic circumstances and lacking the resources or knowledge to raise a child, left him at Saris Abo Church with a letter explaining her desperate decision.

Girma recounted his experience of growing up in foster care and later being adopted abroad. Despite efforts by his adoptive mother to trace his biological roots, no successful connections were made. Ultimately, it was through the intervention of a friend and the reach of EBS TV that Girma's journey home gained momentum. Upon appearing on *"Kidamen Kesat"*, Girma expressed his heartfelt desire to find his family, saying, "I want to find my family. I want to know if I have siblings."

Following the airing of the episode, a woman named W/ro Firehiwot came forward, identifying herself as Girma's potential birth mother. She contacted the program after her son notified her of the televised story. During her interview, she openly discussed the challenges she faced as a young mother, stating, "At that time, my husband and I were very young and I didn't have the capability or knowledge to take care of a child. That's why I entrusted him to the church."

EBS TV facilitated a DNA test for both parties at the International Clinical Laboratory in Addis Ababa. One month later, the results confirmed a 99.9% probability of maternity. The moment of reunion was deeply emotional, marked by tears of joy and a sense of closure. Girma shared, "I am grateful for how this journey went within one month," while W/ro Firehiwot affirmed, "Even before the DNA result, I knew he would be my son—just by looking at his fingers."

This segment not only reunited a family but also demonstrated the profound societal role that media can play in healing, identity formation, and restoring fractured family narratives. Hence, here, it could be seen that media such as EBS are important mechanisms of speeding up the process of reunification and enables viewers to be encouraged to seek family members and increase chances of reunification. It has also the potential to educate the public about what adoption is, including the experiences of the adoptees seeking reunion with their birth families and it could reduce slur (disgrace) and encourage open conversations.

The role of media in identity construction and family reunification has been well-documented in academic literature. Scholars argue that media, especially diaspora broadcasting, can serve as a cultural bridge, connecting individuals with their roots and reinforcing communal bonds (Georgiou, 2006; Karim, 2003). EBS TV's programming aligns with the concept of "mediated belonging," where individuals seek to restore or reaffirm their place within familial or national narratives through storytelling and visual representation.

Moreover, programs like *"Beteseb Filega"* reflect the principles of public service broadcasting, where the media goes beyond entertainment to serve social and emotional needs. Media anthropologists have also emphasized that such interventions contribute to "affective publics"—communities formed around shared emotions and collective memory (Papacharissi, 2015).

In the specific context of adoption, media-assisted searches for birth families are increasingly recognized as both therapeutic and socially necessary. Scholars like Hübinette (2006) and Volkman (2005) argue that adoptees often engage with media to reconstruct identity and reclaim histories that have been obscured by transnational adoption systems.

This implies that the Girma case study underscores the critical role of media not merely as a tool for information dissemination but as a mechanism for social healing, cultural continuity, and emotional restitution. EBS TV's facilitation of family reunification extends its influence beyond conventional broadcasting to the realm of restorative justice and cultural preservation.

For policymakers, this highlights the need to support and invest in media outlets that perform such socially beneficial functions. For the Ethiopian diaspora and other transnational communities, it emphasizes the media's power to reconnect fragmented identities and reconstruct disrupted kinship ties. EBS TV, through programs like *"Kidamen Kesat"*, thus positions itself as a key factor in the moral and emotional economy of diasporic Ethiopian life.

However, it should be noted that despite all the benefits that big medias would bring for adoptees and birth families, it does not always have positive impact. The key informant from Emaye Organization mentioned that there needs to be an ethical manner. Some people may not want their life to be exposed in front of millions of people in the view of the fact that when doing so, it would bring a lot of attention and this could potentially impact the well-being of all parties

involved, especially if not handled with sensitivity and support. And finally, it may open door for false families who claim to be the one who has been looking for the adoptee. Hence, it is not easy to control and something that Emaye organization does not privilege.

4.3.3.2. Peer Referrals within the Organization

From the discussion, the participants from the first focus group noted that existing adoptee–volunteers personally connected them with Emaye's formal processes.

Hence, from what the researcher could interpret that word-of-mouth referrals within the organization's network creates trust, harmonious with community-based models that emphasize peer navigation in post- adoption services.

4.3.3.3.Translation Support

4.3.3.4.Non-Verbal and Digital Strategies

One of the participants from first focus group described resorting to pictures when verbal translation proved insufficient, and texting via Telegram to cousins—though this occasionally exacerbated confusion.

"If I needed to contact my birth family, I sometimes use pictures to understand each other.".

Therefore, what the research could understand from the adoptee's answer is that when translation is partial or unavailable, adoptees adopt visual telling and digital strategies to facilitate initial bond (Sinclair, 2012). These adaptive tactics align with best practices in intercultural communication (Gudykunst, 2005).

4.3.4. Organizational Support and Protocols

4.3.4.1.Holistic Reconnection Services

The key informants have had an aim and vision to reconnect Ethiopian adoptees with their birth families in order to answer the questions of identity. The mission of the organization is to provide a safe and nurturing space for adoptees, adoptive families, and biological families to reunite, share their stories, and build meaningful connections. It is important to clarify that the research does not only focus on those that are successfully reunited and in the process of reunification alone. The research also emphasizes the importance of continuing to strengthen the

shared bonds between the adoptees who have had shared experiences. In this regard, among the pillars of the Emaye Adoptees organization, stabilizing connections is among them. Key informants emphasized Emaye's four - pillar model: Reconnections; Cultural Trips; Ongoing Hosting/Support and; Community Events

from what the key informant explained, the researcher understood that the multidisciplinary approach from the organization does reflect the global practices in post-adoption support. By integrating legal, psychological, and cultural resources, Emaye surpasses a strictly bureaucratic "paper-chasing" model.

4.3.4.2. Preparation protocols and Psychological Readiness

Key informants described months of preparatory sessions—psychotherapy, cultural orientation, and trauma work—before arranging face-to-face reunions.

"Our protocol includes extensive preparation for both adoptees and birth families—months of questioning and trauma work—rather than simply saying, 'Here is your mother or father.'". the reason why there needs to be a preparation is that most of the stories of the adoptees that they share to the organization are not easy to grasp because it had a hard effect on them. Therefore, the organization wants the adoptees to talk about their adoption life starting from the beginning so that it could find the issues of what the adoptee have experienced and it is a way for the organization to prepare the appropriate psychological support. After all the necessary preparations and psychological support, then the adoptee would be considered ready to meet and reunite with his/her birth family.

From what has been explained by the key informant, this phased approach corelates with recommendations for trauma- informed post-adoption services (Howe & Feast, 2000; Siegel, 2015). By addressing potential reunification setbacks for instance; regression, boundary confusion, the organization mitigates risk of psychological distress during reunion (Siegel, 2015; Langrehr, 2013).

4.4. The Double-Edged Sword of Digital Platforms

In the above case study section from the first focus group, it was mentioned the role of social media has a major role for adoptees reuniting with their birth families and in spite its benefits, it has also its own issues. Key informants noted both benefits (rapid outreach, diaspora

engagement) and drawbacks (false leads, privacy concerns) of social media. Social media helps adoptees reconnect, but it can also bring false families and create ethical dilemmas.

From what could be understood and what scholars have mentioned, digital platforms are indispensable in emplacing diaspora adoptees within Ethiopian networks (Fennig & Goldson, 2019), yet they also generate unverifiable claims, raising ethical issues around consent and data accuracy (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007).

Example: On May 12th of 2024, a person named Rache shared his story about his reunion with his younger sister Hawi on an EBS program, more specifically on *Seifu Show*. Rache found and reunited his sister after sixteen years of many attempts of findings. He got separated from his younger sister when he was just a child after his parents died. His sister was taken by SOS Organization without his will and she was taken by a French adoptive parent. For many years, he tried to look for her through different social media platform, even went to SOS Organization in Addis Ababa (before it shut down) to ask the status of his sister but he couldn't find enough information. After various attempts of findings, he finally was able to reach her through a platform called LinkedIn by scanning her photo, which was the only thing he was left. Thus, he started having conversation with her and after that ended, she came to Ethiopia and met her brother. As described by both Rache and Hawi, it was very emotional moment after seeing each other and successfully reunited. She had a lot of questions and her questions were answered when he brought the pictures of him and her, and adoptive parents were very supportive to let her engage with her biological brother.

Consequently, an example was put above to understand that Rache used his own attempts to find his sister but if he had contacted a reunion organization like Emaye Adoptees Family Reunion, it might have eased for him. And despite that digital platform could be used to connect identity exploration and getting access to information, it has also a potential concern for unauthorized access to information, misuse of personal data, and chance of negative interactions.

4.4.1. Document Analysis

For additional information, the researcher was suggested by Emaye Organization to go to Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to ask a member there regarding post adoption reunion. Hence, the researcher found and asked a key informant about the legal frames works and

challenges surrounding the post adoption reunion for the reason that the governmental agency works heavily on the status of adopted individuals and documentation. The informant noted that there is no formal Ethiopian law mandates post-adoption reunion; reporting responsibilities lie with adoptive parents until adoptees turn eighteen.

"There is no law for reuniting adoptees with original families; it is done voluntarily, and adoptive parents report to the Ministry until the child turns eighteen."

From what the researcher interprets, in the absence of a statutory framework—Ethiopia's Council of Ministers Regulation No. 299/2013 (FDRE, 2013; MoWCYA, 2020) governs adoption procedures but does not stipulate post- adoption reunion—NGOs like Emaye organization fill a critical institutional void. However, delayed access to official adoption files underscores a need for formalized legislative reforms.

4.4.2. Culturally Attuned Psychological Supports

Key informants described integrating spirituality, reconnection with nature, and symbolic rituals to address adoptees' emotional needs.

"The psychological journey includes sessions on spirituality and reconnection with nature to help adoptees transcend trauma beyond 'being abandoned. These kinds of things are working at the moment"

Based on what scholars mentioned and what could be interpreted from the key informant, by embedding culturally salient healing practices within its protocol, Emaye organization goes beyond Western clinical paradigms, fostering deeper cultural reintegration. This approach aligns with research on effective post- adoption interventions in non- Western contexts (Verdon, 2018; Washburn, 2012).

4.4.3. The Multifaceted Challenges by Adoptees in the process of post adoption reunion

In the above sections, a well-documented account of adoptees and key informants have suggested the journey to reunification, its process, gratification, and the hopes brought by the reconnections for other adoptees who are attempting to reunite with their birth families. In this regard, it is important to distinguish what the main challenges are that have been persistent in those who have reunited and in those who are in the process of reunification.

4.4.3.1. Structural Challenges

4.4.3.1.1. The Time Taken to Effectively Conduct Reunification

In terms of time, it could be from weeks up to four years of search of the biological family and conduct a successful reunification. There are different types of searches and it includes Administrative Search and Field Search. The field search is very important because sometimes when the specification of document gets so big, the organization goes back to the field. When the organizations' team gets a reference of the birth family, they go from administration to administration for instance: from police stations to orphanage centers. The organization has also a team on the field that goes door to door search, which is a very long search to do and they go to the speculated area of where the adoptees family are. This field search is done if the documents of the birth family (adoptees' history) disappeared. The key informant mentions that "falsification is way worse than a file getting lost". As a result, the organization does DNA tests. For a security purpose, DNA test could be done but it is not an easy task. Another important factor is that the test would be considered if the adoptee accepts and when there is confusion in the documents. Majority of adoptees had a similar story about their displacement. In the emotional search, sometimes birth parents think that's their child but when the DNA test comes in use, the result might not be positive. In general, the organization gives the advice for the adoptees to make the test with the respect of international convention.

4.4.3.1.2. Digital Outreach from the concentration in European countries

Digital Outreach was one of the organization's way of promoting the missions and goals. With the support of partner organization from France, the digital platforms enabled Emaye organization to reach many adoptees from Europe. Both focus groups that the researcher have interviewed through Zoom Meeting in this thesis currently reside in Europe and have explained that they were able to reach the organization's digital platform from people who they know and have shared what the mission and intention, which was about "questing of origin".

4.4.3.2. Organizational Challenges

The key informant from Emaye Organization mentioned that there have been many challenges faced throughout years. In 2002, the first attempt was in France to organize the quest of origin for the reason that the organizers noticed that its necessity for most of adoptees to understand about the reunification. At that time, they tried to convince other organizations about the project but they were against the idea of quest of origin because they found it hard to handle

psychologically and they also noticed it would create problem believing that some documents were falsified."

The other challenge that they dealt was to figure out how to organize a protocol because they were doing research and bring the people to meet each other. The issue as explained by the key informant is that they didn't measure how much difficulties there would be, what the adoptees were going through and it brought a lot of traumas and that's the first major psychological challenge that they have encountered.

4.4.3.2.1. False Claims of Birth Families

In the focus group discussions, one of the recurrent patterns are people falsely claiming that they are birth families. There three usual scenarios of when this happens. According to key informant interviewees, such event occurs when stories are too similar, lack of proper documentation or any recollection in memory (if the adoptee was an infant), and when the falsely claiming family has assumptions driven by malign interests that the adoptee may be an economic and financial supporter if convinced. In modern times, DNA testing has proven to be a decisive tool to differentiate between true and false birth family claims. However, it is important to note that when an adoptee looking for their birth families are faced with false families without their knowledge, the anticipation built on false premises adds on to the psychological and emotional difficulty. These process of checking from the side of Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization is part of the careful yet transparent procedure.

4.4.3.2.2. Expenses in DNA exams

To mitigate the challenges explained in 4.4.5.2.1., the DNA exams are conducted. These tests have proven to be successful while also being typological: paternal, maternal, siblings and the like. In the case that the found family is a distant relative, the DNA tests would be more elaborate and requires a financial resource.

4.4.3.2.3. Challenges in Documentation

In order to facilitate the post adoption reunion, among the first steps is to gather as much information from documents. These documents, according to the key informant interviewee, are gathered from the Ministry of Social and Women Affairs, Kebele and other pertinent organizations. However, since documentation in a digitized system is only introduced recently, documents are prone to be misplaced or ruined. Coupled with the moves made by the Ministry,

key informant interviewees had expressed the difficulties posed when documents couldn't be recovered. Such challenges not only prolong the time frame of finding the birth family, it also risks losing important information about the adoptee themselves.

4.4.3.3. Social Challenges

There are often challenges in engaging the community in the project the project is designing. In an interview with the key informant, it was mentioned that the majority of society in Ethiopia find it hard to understand how much well-being, healthy, and resilience to which the post adoption reunion could bring. However; the potential challenges often revolve around stigmas- in cases of unplanned pregnancies affects the future reunification, emotional instability- confronts past trauma and grapple with the implications of the reunion, and identity issues- questioning their sense of belonging and struggle their two-family identities. Consequently, Emaye Organization's big task is to prepare professionals who support and guide all the parties involved. This includes counselors and therapists are responsible in navigating emotional challenges and developing healthy coping strategies.

4.4.3.3.1. Cultural Differences

In the dynamics and experiences of post adoption reunions, cultural differences play a significant role. It impacts expectations, communication, and the development of relationships. There are different things the organization does to accomplish a successful post adoption reunion. The first thing that the organization does is to have a conversation about the cultural differences about the situation to the birth family where the adoptee has been living so that they could understand that there was a trauma, problematics that the adoptee has went through and explain why both the adoptee and the birth family need to reconnect.

Trauma of abandonment is an issue that the Emaye organization tries to heal through psychological support and is an emotional distress and psychological wounds resulting from being rejected. It is considered to be the most difficult trauma because it touches every step of life. In the case of post adoption reunion, the treatment for trauma of abandonment is for both the adoptee and the birth mother. By understanding the process, it could bring a resilience when both adoptees and birth family decides to change and, in that way, it would create a new life for them.

4.4. Psychological and Emotional Challenges

In an interview with the key informant from Emaye Organization, it was mentioned that the stage to which adoptees experience psychological challenges is the reconnection itself. This includes; accepting their history, who they are, understanding their heritage etc. to control these emotions is the biggest challenge. When an adoptee reconnects with their birth family, a regression would happen because so many years have passed since the separation from the birth parents and the adoptee did not have all the affection needed.

The other challenge is the questions that the adoptee raises. For instance, the questions may include like 'why did they do that to me? Why was I abandoned?' and some of them even try to commit suicide due to the chronic depression and as a result, some don't like themselves or accept themselves.

Other challenge is adoptees living with their adoptive parents, as explained by the key informant, some of them gets abused. The treatment for these types of challenges, the organization helps the adoptees psychologically to express themselves about the challenges they have experienced so that they would let it out of their body and help them express their trauma. These direct impacts on adoptees have given them serious considerations to the commitment of finding their birth families in search of a "home" and a family that they can be safe and cared for, despite the age of the adoptee. In the focus group discussions and key informant interviews, it is mentioned that the desperate need for affection is among the driving force behind the efforts in searching their birth families.

Both the focus group discussions and the key informant interviews have focused on the unexpressed sense of guilt in the lifestyle comparison of adopted family and birth family, given that they had been living in developed countries. This creates the sense of urge to volunteer, and give back to communities where their birth families are originated from. Such is the sense that is also cultivated in meaningful social contributions in communities.

4.4.1. Key Opportunities and Prospects in Post Adoption Reunion

The key opportunities for adoptees are not only about being successfully reunited with their birth family but also, they themselves build a network and contributing for their own birth country. In an interview with the key informant, it was mentioned that most of the adoptees are working at French schools in Addis Ababa. Some even are running their own business in Addis Ababa like

restaurants and travel agency. Therefore, the Emaye Organization helps the adoptees in terms of confidentiality and find a way to support their birth families and understand how the cultural system works in Addis Ababa and other territories so that they would be familiar. From what the researcher understands is that When adoptees participate and work in sectors such as travel agency, the contribution they would make to the tourism industry is immense. It can even go as far as promoting their country of origin.

4.4.1.1. Adoptees Renew their Sense of Identity

Besides individual personality traits, social interactions, personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, reunion allows adoptees to integrate their birth identity with their adoptive identity, which forms a whole sense of self (Browning and Duncan, 2005). These are rooted to even the smallest town where the family practices the day-to-day activities. To provide a post adoption reunion is to provide the adoptee a means of connection, and forming a sense of identity that had been in distance.

Such reunion does not only contribute to the individual sense of self development and identity, but also for the birth family and community as well. Most adoptees have had experiences that can be shared with their families and immediate communities in terms of knowledge transfer, remittance, volunteerism, These experiences, as said by the key informant interviewees, are critical in the formation of the sense of identity as the motivation behind these searches and post reunions is also the feelings of gratitude to share their experiences and give back to the communities that do not have comparable standards of living in contrast with the adoptee's adoption country.

4.4.1.2. Attracting Foreign Direct Investment

The organization's partnership with key stakeholders such as the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which provides monitoring and support to the organization in certain ways in terms of consular, travel services and the issue of women and children and the Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia where the French Embassy in Addis Ababa donated money to the organization for the support of adoptees in support of reunion. It enhances its credibility and relevance within the local and international adoption communities. This strengthens the organizational work by attracting international foreigners and an opening door for adoptees to come to their local country and reunite with their family for those who are seeking.

4.4.1.3. Involving Diaspora Community in Ethiopian Affairs of Development

The Ethiopian diaspora abroad are estimated to be 3 million around the different countries in the world (IOM, 2018). Among those are also with Ethiopian descent. The diaspora community is a vital and crucial part of Ethiopia's make up. The diaspora is responsible for most of remittances and foreign currency to the Ethiopian society. This attribute cannot be seen lightly.

Even though the main reason Emaye Adoptee's Family Organizations work on post adoption reunions to connect lost families, the process also has an economic side of opportunities. To assist post adoption reunions, hence, has implications for adoptee's increase in connection to the birth family, and would also have economic and financial contributions in support of the birth families.

Incorporating these implications into a systematic framework is interpreted in the rationales for a policy review that can shape the dynamics between adoptees and institutional capacities in strengthening the post adoption reunion. Future adoption policies must include the post adoption reunion frameworks to enable adoptees and birth families have connections, digitalized documentations that assist the possible future contributions made upon post adoption reunions.

4.4.1.4. Encourage other Adoptees to find their roots

Adoptees trying to have post adoption reunion under the framework of Emaye Adoptee's Family Organization have a digital platform that can easily be reached. Even though personal stories of success in finding families and having reunions is not a publicly shared information, networks between adoptees in the same adopted countries have tendencies to share their stories among themselves. The snowball effect, hence multiplies through these networks. Emaye Adoptee's Organization also has its own form of organizing the community of adoptees in search of their birth families. These assets are attractive for other adoptees find their families and their roots. These experiences also open doors for touring Ethiopia, as the key informant interviewee has discussed.

4.4.1.6. Attention on Future laws regarding Adoption and integrate Post Adoption Reunion

In terms of policy making, there is a lot of reforms to do because there is no proper policy. According to the key informant from Emaye Organization, it was mentioned that international and national regulations were not really respected. In the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 21 states that a child that is in orphanage is declared as an adoptable in foreign

country only in last occasion. Therefore, making sure that the child's history is somewhere written and controlled but this wasn't done and makes it difficult for the reconnection. It was mentioned that governmental agencies ask adoptive parents for Post Adoption Report to maintain contact with the birth family but it would make it difficult for adoptees to reunite with the birth family if the responsible body didn't write the report about the history of the child.

There should be a relevant body to go to the adoptive countries to see how the child is doing and it would show that the country does care about their own citizen. Article 8 from Convention on the Rights of the Child states that a child has the right to be born to his family, to be raised in his own family, and keep his culture and heritage. The child has also the right to keep his/her name, the right to be able to search for his/her origins. But all these are not possible, because Ethiopia hasn't signed the International Hague Convention. Ethiopia couldn't sign because the first thing is to consider a child as a human being and has a fundamental right. Therefore, as explained by the key informant that Ethiopia should have a rule that strengthens the childhood protection. In general, some rules need to be reformed to strengthen the protection of child.

4.4.1.7. Attention to Proper Documentation

In an interview with the key informant, it was mentioned that Governmental Agencies who's responsible in handling the documents of adoptees history has not given the proper attention in the view of the fact that when majority of the adoptees' documents reviewed, the name and address of most birth family members has not been written properly, which makes it even more difficult for reunion organizations like Emaye to work on reunification process. The key informant also indicated that about an estimation of 70% of the documents have been falsified and this includes the name and the address of the birth family. In post adoption reunion, proper documentation is pivotal for preserving a child's history and in creating a healthy sense of identity. This includes maintaining and sharing adoption records, creation of an adoption storybook, and a potential establishment of post adoption-contact agreement. However, according to the key informant, there is nothing prepared for post adoption system like post adoption-contact agreement.

4.5 Discussion

The finding results that were discussed in Chapter Four are linked to the Theoretical Review debated in Chapter Two (2.1). Therefore, each theories have significant meanings to what the participants have shared about their post adoption reunion journey and challenge. Adoptees from the second focus group collectively share that they have been emotionally struggling and urging to contact and reunite with their birth family in the view of the fact that they felt that they didn't belong to their adoptive family. This correlates with "**Attachment Theory**", which emphasizes on the impact of early separations and the process of reunion could assist them fulfilling the need of connection and long-term relationship.

Adoptees from the first and second focus group have shared what the opportunities that Emaye Organization provided to them. This includes building on networks, self-confidence and community events (Story Telling Events). This intertwines with "**Identity Formation Theory**" and "**Narrative Theory**" in the view of the fact that a strong sense of self builds confidence that leads to valuing themselves and a healthy post adoption reunion with birth families. The last theory is "**Family System Theory**", which views family as an interconnected emotional unit and Post Adoption Reunion often reshape family roles and dynamics. This theory goes one on one with what the first focus group have been experiencing about Post Adoption Reunion specifically how the adoptees have been staying in touch with their birth family via social media platform from where they currently reside after Emaye Organization have found their birth family and facilitated their reunification.

Summary of Key Findings

Digital Channels as Gateways: Facebook and Zoom are indispensable for diaspora adoptees, but they also carry significant risks of misinformation (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007; Fennig & Goldson, 2019).

Translation and Mediation: the organization's multilingual translators and peer navigators are critical to overcoming linguistic barriers (Roberts, 2017; Sinclair, 2012).

Reunion Process: starts from the adoptee's decision wanting to reconnect with the birth families then contacts an organization-in this case Emaye Adoptees' Family Reunion- that works on quest of origin and then organization facilitates contact with the adoptee to understand the history and reviews documents of the adoptee. After reviewing the files of the adoptee's file, the

organization tries to find and contact where the birth families are. One challenge remains with loss of documentation, if it cannot be found in governmental organization, the Emaye Organization prepares a two team of professionals to go door to door to a speculated area to find the birth family in the field work and the other one goes to different administrations to find the recorded documentation of the adoptees' history and birth family. After the reunification with the birth family succeeded, the process does not end there. There are months of preparation with questions that would be raised, handling trauma and there are different ways of working on reconnection.

Holistic Preparation Mitigates Regression: Phased protocols of Emaye Organization when it comes to reunion preparation combines with psychotherapy, cultural orientation, and legal briefings—align with trauma-informed best practices (Howe & Feast, 2000; Siegel, 2015).

External Barriers Persist: Political instability (Young, 2020) and inactivity from institutions (MoWCYA, 2020) often delay or complicate reunions.

Individual Variability in Emotional Trajectories: While some adoptees from the first focus group experienced minimal distress, others have report significant anxiety, underscoring the necessity for tailored psychosocial interventions (Langrehr, 2013; Siegel, 2015).

Legislative Gap: Ethiopia's lack of formal post-adoption reunion laws (Council of Ministers Regulation No. 299/2013; MoWCYA, 2020) places NGOs like Emaye at the forefront, but also highlights a policy gap needing government attention.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This chapter synthesizes the key findings from the presentation and thematic analysis in Chapter Four, drawing on personal narratives, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The aim is to present the major conclusions that reflect both the lived experiences of adoptees and the structural roles played by the Emaye organization in post-adoption reunion processes. These conclusions are categorized into two main areas:

1. the post-reunion experiences of adoptees
2. the organizational challenges and contributions of Emaye.
3. the impact of social media in the post adoption reunion landscape
4. Integral practices offered by Emaye Organization.

All four together, they address the core research objectives and provide a foundation for subsequent policy and practice recommendations.

This chapter included (employed) both narrative and thematic analyses to study the Adoptees' lived experiences who received services through Emaye Organization and have reunited with their birth family and it also includes Emaye's major role in post- adoption reunion efforts. Through in-depth interview and critical reflections, this chapter spearheads the voices of the adoptees and highlights key structural and emotional factors, which influence the outcomes of reunion.

Digital Networks, Translation, and Psychosocial Support: in the findings of this study, its highpoints the important role of digital infrastructures and this includes communication platforms like zoom meeting and WhatsApp in facilitating transnational reconnections. Therefore, social media platforms serve as crucial entry points for adoptees beginning the search for their birth families. While enabling reconnection, there is also a risk in exposure of adoptees to misinformation and false leads. It has been highlighted by the participants that accessing to reliable translational services was crucial in connecting linguistic divides, enabling more authentic and deep emotional interaction between adoptees and birth families. Another factor is that limited Amharic or French/English proficiency poses a recurring challenge. Successful

reunions often relied on translators, nonverbal cues, and messaging apps to bridge communication gaps. According to Gibbons and Rotabi (2012), technological and linguistics support become not only convenience but also critical enablers of identity restoration and familial rehabilitation.

Moreover, the collected data enhances the importance of structured psychosocial preparation for adoptees entering on the reunification's journeys. The emotional weight of these experiences often complexed by incomplete documentation, memories of early trauma, and cultural confusion, which requires adaptable interventions. The existing literature on post adoption mental health lines up with this discussion as it advocates for trauma-informed, initializing to culturally grounded counseling and following reunion experiences (Neil et a, 2015).

Adoptee's insights and solidarity: through zoom meeting interviews, adoptees shared valuable recommendations that could be considered as guidance for other adoptees who seek for reunion, suggesting their personal knowledge should be treated as a form of expert testimony. For instance, one adoptee suggested by saying this: "*Preparation is very important before going to Ethiopia…bring other adoptees in this post- adoption system to share emotional burden*". And according to Howe and Feast (2000), it was highlighted about the peer solidarity (mutual support) in reducing psychological distress and enhancing resilience during identity reconnection. Reunion experiences vary widely among adoptees—from anxiety and fear to smooth emotional transitions. These differences are influenced by pre-reunion support, personality, and past trauma The presence of other adoptees helps create a sense of supportive network that could normalize the complex emotions that surrounds reunion, fostering a sense of shared understanding and mutual network.

Other adoptee also noted by saying: "*it is necessary to have trustful people around you. Don't believe everything people tell you especially about your files*". This heed shows the weakness of documentation in the context of post adoption. It orients with what other scholars have critiqued, according to Rotabi and Bunkers (2014), it was acclaimed that there has been inconsistent recordkeeping, falsified information, and lack of transparency were documented. The disbelief from Adoptees reflects a deep structural failure to uphold transparency and ethical accountability in adoption process.

Institutional challenge and the role of MoWCA: a representative from Ministry of Women and Children Affairs revealed that the ministry is handling a project to reconstruct a comprehensive database of adoptee records. This effort arises from an issue that have existed for a long time: the disappearance or degradation of critical documentation. The lack of important records that are considered as critical significantly inhibits reunion efforts and has led to a psychological stress among adoptees who seek clarity about their origins. The representative noted: "*Due to the disappearance of documentation, many adoptees face psychological distress, and reunification becomes more difficult*".

Hence, urgent need for digital archiving and managing the information systems is something that should be given a plethora of attention. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2019) declared that moving from hardcopy files to a secure digital database could mitigate the loss of sensitive data. Moreover, digital data storage facilitates a much easier coordination among institutions, civil society organizations and adoptees that were legally taken from Ethiopia.

Despite all the admirable work of Emaye Organization and Governmental bodies like MoWCA, they also deal with systemic barriers. It includes: political instability, which hampers safe travel and reunification with birth family, and legal uncertainty on adoption practices and birth records. These kinds of issues go beyond the scope of private organizations, indicating the emergence of multi sectoral policy reform. According to Gibbons and Rotabi (2012), ethical post adoption practice often requires collaborating with governments, civil society, mental health providers and adoptees themselves.

5.2. Major Conclusions on Emaye Organizational Role and Challenges

1. **Holistic Support as a Best-Practice Model:** Emaye's four-pillar approach—reconnection, cultural immersion, ongoing psychosocial support, and community-based hosting—represents an effective, trauma-informed framework for post-adoption reunion.
2. **Gaps in legal and institutional frameworks:** Ethiopia lacks formal legal mandates for post-adoption reunions. This absence puts so much pressure on NGOs like Emaye Organization to fill critical service and accountability gaps, often without state recognition or systemic support.

3. **Needs for Structured Preparation and follow up:** The importance of preparatory psychological support and staged reunions emerged clearly. Adoptees who underwent structured orientation and therapy reported more stable and meaningful reunions.
4. **Documentation Gaps:** Most of the documents of adoptees have been either lost or has not been written accurately about birth parents' address. This not only affected the post adoption reunion process but also created an emotional challenge on adoptees and it has created difficulties on Emaye Organization.

5.3. Implications of Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from this study carry important implications for adoptees, NGOs, policymakers, and future researchers:

1. **For Adoptees and Families:** The findings reinforce the need for adoptees to receive individualized psychological preparation and post-reunion counselling. The emotional complexity and cultural disorientation many faces during reunion underscore that "finding" family is only the beginning of a longer healing journey.
2. **For NGOs and Practitioners:** Emaye's multidisciplinary and culturally grounded approach should be considered a model for other post-adoption services as it prioritizes on identity formation, works on advocacy and raising awareness and integrates on lived experience. However, its work also highlights the strain placed on NGOs operating without systemic support. Strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships (with legal institutions, health providers, diaspora associations) would enhance sustainability.
3. **For Ethiopian Policy Makers:** The lack of a legal framework governing post-adoption reunion creates structural vulnerabilities, particularly around document access, ethical standards, and data protection. Formal state recognition of post-adoption services, and integration into the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Affairs (MoWCYA) programs, is urgently needed.
4. **For International Adoption Systems:** This study exposes how initial adoption processes—often poorly documented or managed—resurface years later, impacting reunion efforts. Ethical adoption must include long-term accountability, including traceability, cultural connection, and the right to post-adoption information access.

5. **For Future Research:** Further longitudinal studies are needed to track adoptees' well-being years after reunion. Areas such as transnational identity formation, intergenerational impact on Ethiopian birth families, and the role of digital technology in shaping narrative memory are ripe for exploration.

5.4. Concluding Reflections

This study set out to examine the post-adoption reunion experiences of adoptees supported by Emaye Adoptees' Family Reunion, and in doing so, uncovered a complex terrain of hope, trauma, resilience, and institutional absence. While the organization has stepped in to bridge emotional and logistical gaps left by both domestic and international adoption agencies, it does also within a fragile ecosystem as well.

The narratives presented illustrate that reunion is not a singular event but a layered, evolving process shaped by personal history, cultural disconnection, and collective memory. For many adoptees, the journey back to Ethiopia is not only about recovering family, but also about reclaiming selfhood.

Ultimately, this research affirms that post-adoption reunion requires more than logistical coordination—it includes the necessity of culturally responsive care, legal clarity, and deep emotional insight. Supporting adoptees in their search for origins is not solely a personal favor but a human rights imperative grounded in dignity, identity, and belonging.

5.5. Recommendations

5.5.1 Institutionalize Post Adoption Protocols at the National Level

The reason why it needs to be put into consideration is because the key informant from Emaye organization mentioned that there is no actual policy in facilitation of searches and the absence of formal governmental policy regulating post-adoption reunions leaves NGOs like Emaye organization to operate in a legal gap. Formal state involvement would ensure standardization, accountability, and ethical oversight. Different Scholars have pointed out that creating national frameworks that ensure adoptees' right to identity and reunion aligns with international norms, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Cantwell et al., 2012). According to Selman (2009), countries like South Korea and Colombia have implemented registries and state-funded tracing programs.

5.5.2 Strengthening on Protecting Adoptees' Documentation

Based on an interview made with the adoptees who have reunited with their family, this would be considered as critical for adoptees seeking to reunite and continue their relationship with their birth family. The security of adoptees' documentation by governmental agencies is significant for the reason that the protection of adoptees' documentation provides crucial identity information, medical history, resolves questions and a potential reconnection with their birth family could create emotional stability (Clapton, 2008).

In addition, according to the key informant from MoWCA is that even though international adoption was declared to be banned in Ethiopia back in 2018, there are still some important cases pending in court. Therefore, there needs to be critical investigation on each form and documents. The researcher believes that it would be difficult for future reunification and would bring psychological crisis on the adoptee since he/she was told different story about his/her birth family.

5.5.3. Integrate Culturally Relevant Psychosocial Support into Reunion Preparation

The reason why it matters is because previously in Chapter Four, it was revealed that adoptees who were seeking to reunite with their birth family have been facing anxiety, identity disruption, and cultural dissonance. Just as Emaye Organization currently working on, integrating spiritual practices, nature-based healing, and local rituals could promote emotional closure and cultural

reintegration for others. Different scholars agree that the effectiveness of incorporating indigenous knowledge was emphasized in the therapeutic settings for international adoptees (Verdon, 2018). Western psychological models alone often fall short in cross-cultural contexts and the recommendable approach would be strengthening the development of culturally sensitive approach and the verification of indigenous psychological frameworks (Washburn, 2012).

5.5.4. Establish a Digital Verification and Tracing Platform

This reason behind its necessity is of course the people who participated in this thesis mentioned that they discovered the organization through Facebook, but digital misinformation remains a major threat. A secure, official online registry (possibly supported by governmental organization or international partners) would minimize fraud and strengthen trust in reunion processes.

Scholars suggest that digital tools are increasingly central in family tracing (Fennig & Goldson, 2019), but it does require analyzing mechanisms to avoid any kinds of ethical violations (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). Verified platforms could serve as gateways that is safe for adoptees adopted by foreigners.

5.5.5. Providing Language Training and Cultural Orientation for Adoptees

It is crucial to provide such training because a key informant from Emaye organization mentioned that when an adoptee gets raised in foreign country, there should be a possibility in facilitation so that adoptees could learn what their culture is. In that way, adoptees would be able to speak their original tongue and when reconnection happens with the birth family, the barrier in language could be reduced. Hence, language emerged as a recurring barrier during reunions. Offering pre-travel Amharic or other local language lessons, cultural workshops, and diaspora mentorship could reduce communication breakdown and enhance reunion quality.

Support from scholars suggest that cross-linguistic preparedness increases self-confidence of adoptees and facilitates smoother interaction with biological families (Roberts, 2017; Sinclair, 2012). Language serves not just as a tool for conversation but also as a symbol of reclaimed identity.

5.6 Future Research Directions

It has to be acknowledged that there needs to be critical investigation on some of the issues that this research couldn't answer but would be open for other researchers who are interested in studying the issues surrounding the post adoption reunion. To build on the foundation of this study, the following future research directions are proposed:

5.6.1. Using Participatory Research Method

Post adoption reunion is a complex emotional experience for both adoptees and birth families. Therefore, to understand and investigate issues revolving around post adoption reunion more deeply, it would be recommendable for future researchers to use participatory research method as this thesis couldn't achieve using it due to the limitations of contacting the participants personally. Conducting Participatory Research would be a great opportunity as it involves both relevant stakeholders and communities throughout the entire research process to address the post adoption reunion issues and create positive outcome (Vaughn et al, 2020).

5.6.2. Longitudinal Study on Post Adoption Adjustment

A study tracking adoptee over multiple years post-reunion would provide insight into long-term psychological outcomes, identity evolution, and the sustainability of kinship ties. In assertion, most research, including this study, captures adoptee experiences at a single point in time. However, identity reconstruction and emotional reconciliation are evolving processes (Langrehr, 2013; Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010).

5.6.3. Birth Family Perspectives on Reunion

Future studies should include the views of Ethiopian birth families as it would provide a more complete picture of the emotional, social, and cultural dynamics at play during reunions. In validation, the existing literature and this thesis are adoptee and organization centered. Including birth family voices would highlight relational imbalance and cultural expectations that influence reunion success (Yngvesson, 2010).

5.6.4. The Role of Adoptive Families

This study did not focus on the adoptive family's perspective due to the limitations it dealt but for future researchers, investigating how adoptive parents support (or hinder) reunion efforts could shed light on inter-family tensions and opportunities for ternary healing. This justifies adoptive parents remain key stakeholders, especially in early adulthood. Their role in framing adoption narratives and shaping expectations is considered to be pivotal (Siegel & Smith, 2018).

5.6.5. Ethical Implications of Digitally Mediated Reunions

A targeted study on the ethical and emotional risks of using unregulated platforms like Facebook and Telegram for family tracing would inform digital policy and best practices. In defense**,** this study revealed digital tools as both enablers and risk factors to an extent. Hence, future researchers understanding adoptees' digital behavior could lead to safer online reunion protocols (Fennig & Goldson, 2019; Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007).

5.6.6. Comparative Analysis of NGO Models in Other Adoption-Origin Countries

Ethiopia not having a formal system for Post Adoption Contact Agreement might put pressure on reunion organizations such as Emaye in facilitating face to face contact extensively. Therefore, future researchers studying on Cross-country comparison between Ethiopia and other different countries who encourage Post Adoption Contact Agreement could be the best way to identify best practices and contextual limitations (Neil et al, 2015). This is to assert that transnational learning could improve service design in Ethiopia. Comparative research fosters adaptive policy frameworks suited to local contexts (Selman, 2009).

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APPENDIX

Annex 1: Interview guide for adoptees from Emaye Organization who found and reunited with their birth family

Note: These questions are prepared for research purposes. Feel free and give your honest thoughts when you answer the questions down below. Thank you for your cooperation!

1. How long has it been since you had a reunion with your birth family?
2. Was language a barrier when you met your birth family for the first time? How is it going now?
3. How did you know about Emaye's Adoptee Family Reunion Organization and why did you choose this organization?
4. What were the opportunities that the organization offered to you?
5. What were the actions that you have taken to find your birth family before going to Emaye's Adoptee Family Reunion?
6. Following question number 5, what were the challenges throughout the process?
7. What would you recommend for a successful reunion?

Annex 2: Interview guide for adoptees from Emaye Organization seeking to reunite with their birth family

Note: These questions are prepared for research purposes. Feel free and give your honest thoughts when you answer the questions down below. Thank you for your cooperation!

1. How did you find out about Adoptee's Family Reunion Organization and why did you choose them?
2. What was your experience in Adoptee's Family Reunion Organization?
3. What opportunities did the Organization offer to you?
4. Were there any actions did you take to find your birth families before you were introduced to Emaye Adoptee's Family Reunion Organization?
5. What were the challenges that you have faced throughout this process?
6. How long have you been waiting to meet your birth families?

Annex 3: Interview guide for key informants from Emaye Adoptees' Family Organization

Note: these questions are prepared for research purpose regarding post adoption reunion. Feel free and give your honest thoughts when you answer the questions down below. Thank you for your cooperation!

1. When has Emaye's Adoptees Family Organization been established and what are the major works that the organization does in regards to Post Adoption Reunion?
2. What are the legal challenges that the organization faced during Post Adoption Reunion?
3. What are the opportunities that the organization have acquired from Post Adoption Reunion?
4. How would you describe the process of facilitating for adoptees to reunite with their birth family?
5. As technologies evolving, has the use of social media benefited the post adoption reunion? How do you utilize them?
6. What is the legal status of the relationship between adoptive parents and birth families when it comes to post adoption reunion?
7. How would you describe the financial capability of the organization to undertake the process of the post adoption union? What are the important expenditures? What is financially expected from a person in search of their biological family? Are there options for family search programs funded by the organization and if so, under what circumstances?
8. What would you recommend for a successful post adoption reunion?
9. which organizations partner with the Emaye Adoptees organizations in terms of funding? What role does this play in the organization's capacity?
10. After the ban of international adoption, has it affected the post adoption reunion?

Annex 4: Interview Guide for key informants from Emaye adoptees Family organization regarding the psychotherapy provision

Note: these questions are prepared for research purpose regarding post adoption reunion. Feel free and give your honest thoughts when you answer the questions down below. Thank you for your cooperation!

1. It is known that every individual has their own experience. What could be considered as the recurrent psychological shocks?
2. What is the process of the psychotherapy journey?
3. Which stages do the adoptees experience psychological challenges and what can the organization do for them?
4. Do you get access to the adoptee family? Does the organization record information of the adoptees about their adopted families? If so, if the adoptee discloses psychological challenges or abuse from their adopted families, what would the organization do in terms of addressing a psychological trauma?
5. In the process of reunion, how far does the organization go to look for the biological family? What is the extent taken to find the biological family?
6. To what degree would previous documents of the adoptee help? What happens if the documents of the adoptee are not available? To what extent does social media, broadcasting media such as EBS, or any other digital platform enable the search for biological families?
7. what role does social media or broadcasting play when adoptees want to find their families in a private manner rather than it being public? What are the challenges regarding the journey of finding families in public? How will vulnerability impact the process?

Annex 5: Interview Guide for key informant from Ministry of Women and Children Agency (MoWCA)

Note: these questions are prepared for research purpose regarding post adoption reunion. Feel free and give your honest thoughts when you answer the questions down below. Thank you for your cooperation!

1. In relation to post adoption reunion, what are the rules for reuniting adoptees with their family?
2. Is there a commitment from adoptees to find their biological families from a psychological perspective?
3. How is social media viewed in relation to post adoption reunion? How are they utilized?
4. How does Article 183, (1) to (3) of the revised Family Law apply to Post Adoption Reunion?
5. What are the biggest challenges faced in post adoption reunion? How do you solve them?

ለሴቶች እና ሕጻናት ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር (MoWCA) የተዘጋጀ ቃለ መጠይቅ

ማሳሰቢያ፡ እነዚህ ጥያቄዎች ከጉዲፈቻ በኋላ ከቤተሰብ ጋር እንደገና መገናኘትን በተመለከተ ለጥናታዊ ምርምር ተዘጋጅቱዋል፡፡ ከዚህ በታች ያሉትን ጥያቄዎች ሲመልሱ ነጻነት ይሰማዎ እና ሀቀኛ ሃሳቦችዎን ይስጡ፡፡ ስለ ትብብርዎ አመሰግናለሁ!

1. ከጉዲፈቻ በኋላ ከቤተሰብ ጋር እንደገና መገናኘትን በተመለከተ በጉዲፈቻ የተወሰዱ ልጆችን ከቤተሰቦቻቸው ጋር ለማገናኘት የተቀመጠ ህግ አለ ወይ?
2. በጉዲፈቻ የተወሰዱ ልጆች ትክክለኛ ቤተሰቦቻቸውን ለማግኘት ከስነ ልቦና አንጻር ቁርጠኝነት አለ?
3. ከጉዲፈቻ በኋላ ከቤተሰብ ጋር እንደገና መገናኘትን በተመለከተ ማህበራዊ ሚዲያ እንዴት ይታያል? እንዴት ጥቅም ላይ ይውላሉ?
4. የተሻሻለው የቤተሰብ ሕግ አንቀጽ 183 ፤ ንዑስ አንቀጽ 1 -3 ከጉዲፈቻ በኋላ ከቤተሰብ ጋር እንደገና መገናኘትን በተመለከተ እንዴት ይሰራል?
5. ከቤተሰብ ጋር እንደገና ለመገናኘት ያጋጠማችሁ ተግዳሮት በዋነኝነት ምንድን ነው? እንዴትስ ነው የምትፈቱት?