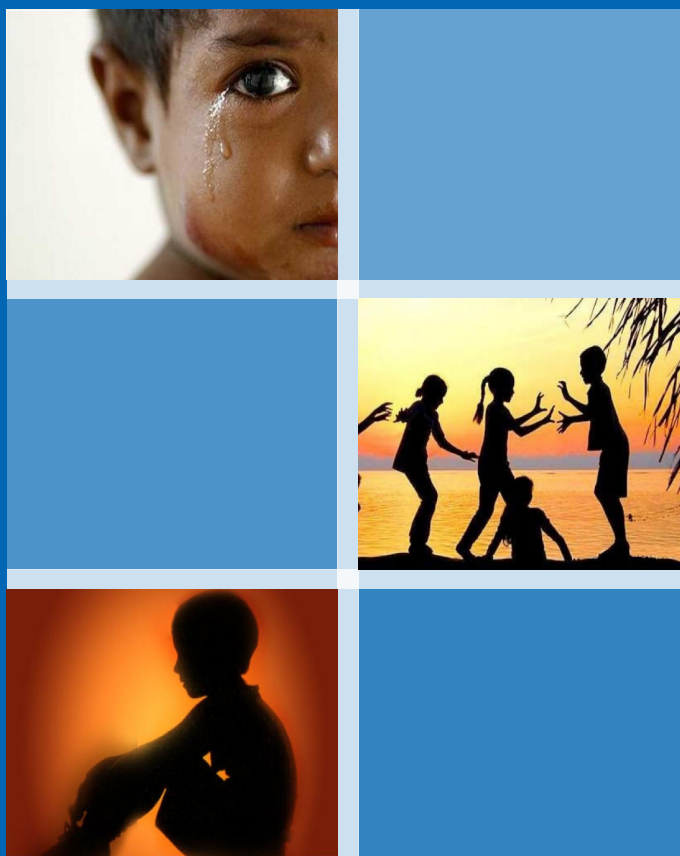


The Rights of Children in Ethiopia: Empirical Investigations from Multidisciplinary Perspectives



Editors

Alula Pankhurst, Yeraswork Admassie, Yitayew Alemayehu



Center for Human Rights
Addis Ababa University

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Edited by

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Addis Ababa**

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Introduction: Children's Rights Between Global Norms and Local Realities in Ethiopia

Alula Pankhurst, Yeraswork Admassie, and Yitayew Alemayehu

Children and issues affecting them have been the subject of numerous research papers by graduate students of Addis Ababa University (AAU). Theses written by undergraduate and especially graduate students as parts of the requirements for their degrees are notable in this regard. This book brings together chapters based on condensed and revised versions of a few notable examples of theses (and a dissertation) that have a broad focus on child rights issues produced in different departments of AAU. The chapters are based on collaborative efforts between the graduate students and their advisors and were reworked on the basis of comments from the editors.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE AAU CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The book is published by the AAU Center for Human Rights. Established in 2008 to promote multidisciplinary scholarship in human rights, the Center offers an interdisciplinary MA in Human Rights, and, together with the Center for Federal Studies and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, a joint PhD in Peace, Security, Federalism and Human Rights. As part of its mission to engage in community service, the Center also runs one of the largest legal aid provision services through its Access to Justice Project.

Besides its teaching and community service activities, the Center has also been active in promoting research in human rights. Besides the original studies carried out by its graduate students in partial fulfillment of the requirements for their degrees, and the individual research pursued by its faculty, the Center organizes and conducts research in selected issues on human rights (Benedek, Pipan, et al. 2014) and access to justice (Toggia, Geraghty and Kokebe 2014) and is finalizing a multisite investigation of

women's experiences with the law and the administration of justice as well as the cultural and institutional challenges in realizing women's rights.

A major area of focus for the Center's research activities is the rights of children. Under its Child Rights Project, implemented with the financial support of Save the Children International, the Center carried out several academic and policy oriented studies aimed particularly to serve as inputs for the improvement of the broader policy and legislative child rights framework. The Baseline Study for a Comprehensive Child Law in Ethiopia (Center for Human Rights 2013), the assessments of Ethiopia's draft child policy (Fasil and Rakeb 2014) and the study on the implications of the Growth and Transformation Plan on the rights of children (Tadesse and Yitayew 2014) are particularly noteworthy.

The present book is also published as part of the Child Rights Project. It is, however, different from previous research published by the Center under the Child Rights Project. While the broad goal of promoting the rights of children through research remains the same, the research results published in this book are primarily academic in their organization and content. Though all the studies included in the book examine, to varying degrees of depth, the policy and legislative framework of child rights in Ethiopia, and based on such examination, make policy recommendations, their essential aim, unlike previous publications of the Center, was not to serve as inputs for the policy reform process. They were rather produced to meet academic requirements, emphasizing the methodological, theoretical and empirical expectations of their respective academic disciplines and departments. The second difference is that, while previous studies on child rights published by the Center were produced by the faculty of the Center itself with little, if any, involvement of outsiders, the studies in the present volume are produced by faculty and students outside the Center.

These differences were rather deliberately designed by the Center. Over the past two years, the Center has been taking measures to coherently articulate and to emphatically accentuate its distinct mission of promoting inter- and multidisciplinary engagement in human rights through its core functions of teaching, research and community service. As is well known, scholarship and activism in human rights has for long been dominated by lawyers. While the law and lawyers have essential roles in understanding the scope of, and promoting human rights, that role is by no means sufficient to realize human rights. The succinct crystallization of human rights norms in the legal rules and concepts of international treaties and domestic laws may give the impression that the realization of human rights is nothing more than a matter of simple adherence to these orderly rules. Nothing, of course, can be further from the truth.

Realizing human rights calls for a deep understanding and systematic transformation of deep-rooted structures of power and resource allocation, as well as of culturally ingrained cognitive frames, values and norms about what is right and how it should be attained. The sheer complexity of such an understanding and transformation evidently calls for theoretical and methodological perspectives and insights from the diverse fields and disciplines around which human knowledge is organized. Within academia such multidisciplinary engagement in human rights in general and the right of children in particular is not only becoming accepted, but is also being recognized as indispensable. Academia's embracing of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary engagement with human rights is also encouraged, if not prompted, by the wide acceptance, within international and domestic policy circles, of human rights-based approaches to major policy issues including those relevant to development.

Within the AAU system, the Center for Human Rights is now at the forefront of promoting multi- and interdisciplinary engagement in human rights. As a multi- and interdisciplinary unit within the College of Law and Governance Studies, the Center's unique contribution is its focus on conjoining the normative with the empirical. In other words, the Center focuses and encourages the application of the methodological and theoretical perspectives of the empirical social sciences and the humanities to study the content, the social dynamics, the cultural interpretations, the practical significance, the structural constraints and opportunities of the rules and principles of the law, more specifically, of human rights law.

Traditional studies of the law (including laws on the rights of the child) view the law as an orderly closed system the validity of which (and the validity of research about it) depends on the internal, logical consistency of its hierarchically organized principles and rules. A multidisciplinary approach to human rights as pursued by the Center, on the other hand, conceives of the law differently. The law in general, and human and child rights law in particular, are open, porous and contingent sub-systems ensconced within, and influenced by, as well as influencing, a larger open social system shaped by history, politics, economics as well as by social values, norms and organizations.¹ Understanding human rights calls for research conducted within or integrating the insights derived from disciplines that take these diverse factors as their subject matter.

¹ Such views of the law as one shaped by and shaping the social context within which it exists have established roots going back at least to the historical school of German jurisprudence and the American legal realists. For discussions of these views, see Friedman (1975) and Calavita (2010). Luhmann (2004) provides a sophisticated discussion of how the law exists and operates as an autopoiesis (i.e. self-reproducing) system within a larger social system.

2. The Genesis Of This Book

In deciding to publish this book the Center thus wanted to use this as an opportunity of promoting multidisciplinary engagement in child rights. The book thus focuses on studies conducted in academic disciplines and departments that are primarily concerned with the empirical rather than merely the normative investigation of child rights and child related issues.

Besides its broad aim of promoting multidisciplinary engagement in child rights, the Center has some quite specific objectives for the book. The first of these objectives is that of encouraging the critical application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to inform the research agenda within AAU and beyond. As already noted, children and issues affecting them provide a profuse source of research questions for the faculty and students of AAU.

The degree to which these studies use the Convention on the Rights of the Child to frame their research questions, to direct their investigation, or to understand and interpret their findings, however, may not be as optimal as one might wish. The very comprehensiveness of the Convention, as well as its global and national acceptance as the standard of proper behavior, not only for the state, but also for all those dealing with children, should and does provide solid grounding for any research dealing with children. Such a “child rights based” approach to research, in turn, contributes to designing and taking practical measures to give effect to the principles and rules of the Convention.

The Center also wants to use this book as a forum to bring the research conducted by graduate students to a wider public. As already noted, graduate students within the AAU system each year produce invaluable studies on topical issues. The University is taking measures, through its library system, to make the theses and dissertations written by its students publicly available. While this is very laudable, there is much that needs to be done to make these papers widely known, easily accessible, and readably presentable. Student research papers, intended to meet departmental requirements, leave much to be desired to be considered as original scholarly work readily consumable by the academic, professional policy and practicing community outside the narrow confines of academic departments.

In relation to the topic at hand, the rights of children, to date there has not been any initiative, to the best of our knowledge, to bring together students’ studies dealing with the various aspects of child rights. This book addresses this lacuna. By gathering students’

studies, having them edited by faculty advisors to address observable gaps in data and methodological weaknesses and to make them scholarly acceptable and readable by a wider readership, the book attempts to have the research papers of students, and therefore the knowledge generated within AAU, more widely accessible. An added benefit is that the book has rekindled and helped to sustain the joint interests of faculty advisors and their former students on the issues investigated in the studies and their implications for the rights of children.

With these objectives in mind, the Center launched the project of publishing this book more than a year ago by establishing a panel of editors composed of a faculty member of the Center and two widely recognized researchers with expertise in social research with a focus on children and child-related issues. The panel of editors decided to limit the studies to be included in the book to theses and dissertations carried out between 2010 and 2014. Considering the schedule for the completion of the project, the panel felt that there would not be enough time to conduct new empirical research. The panel also believed that empirical research conducted before 2010 would be dated and may lose its currency.

Despite the relatively wide time span covered by, and the expansive framing of, the call for contributions (“research on issues affecting the rights, interests, and welfare of children”), the response that the panel received, in terms of applications made to take part in the project, was hardly enthusiastic. We assume that this was mainly due to the very novelty of the initiative that calls for students and their faculty advisors to collaboratively convert theses and dissertation into scholarly articles of a sufficient quality for publication in a reputable journal.

The panel of editors evaluated the initial applications on the basis of the relevance of the underlying theses/dissertation to understanding the state and challenges of realizing the rights of the child, and on whether they are empirical in their subject matter and methodology.

Six submissions were selected for inclusion and returned to the students and faculty advisors to be rewritten as scholarly articles of publishable quality. Rewriting involved extensive work on the part of the faculty advisor. Existing data had to be reanalyzed and reinterpreted, and in some cases new data had to be gathered. The rewriting also involved extensive comments by the team of editors and experts outside the team of editors that had to be addressed by the student researchers and faculty advisors. Naturally, it also involved much back and forth between the editors and the researchers. The four chapters

in this book are those that passed through this lengthy, and hopefully rigorous, procedure successfully.

3. Key Issues on Child Rights Addressed in the Chapters: Debates Between International Standards and Grassroots Perspectives

Each of the chapters deal with a different issue that affects the rights of children raising important implications on how global legal standards relate to local norms and realities, with the empirical evidence sometimes challenging taken for granted assumptions.

The first chapter by Daniel and Solomon from the Department of Geography studies the lives children working on the streets of Dilla, a bustling commercial town that is a local center of the global coffee market. Following on from the pioneering work on this subject by Tatek Abebe (2008) in the same part of Southern Nations Nationalities and People's region the study looks at how this globalized economy locally affects the experience of childhood in pushing/pulling children to live/work on the street, and also in affording them opportunities of exercising their agency. Taking issue with what is referred to as the "pathological model" of children working on the street, the chapter argues that how we understand childhood and work by children should be informed not only by the socio-economic and cultural context, but more importantly, by the degree to which children are able to be autonomous and exercise agency.

This is a theme already widely addressed by works on "street children", notably in the Ethiopian context in the book published Paola Heinonen (2013) based on her PhD thesis on youth gangs and street children in Addis Ababa. While many may take issue with some of the arguments, the chapter's insistence on being mindful of the views and experiences of children cannot be disputed. Implicit in the recognition of the potentially empowering facets of children's work is a recognition that global standards may be at odds with local realities and needs and aspirations of working children, as was emphasized in a recent book of African case studies of working children published by the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (Pankhurst et al. 2014). Protecting children from work that interferes with children's development is rightly prohibited by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 32), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (article 15), and Convention 182 (1999) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the worst forms of child labour. However, while children need protection from excessive and harmful work, the

ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Employment seeks to exclude children from labour-force work below a certain age, whether or not this work is shown to be harmful, and irrespective of conditions of work. This does not protect children from harmful work outside employment, seeks to prohibit younger children from working in conditions that can potentially be beneficial to themselves, their families and play a useful role in their socialization and development of life skill as noted by Daniel and Solomon in the chapter, and it also fails to protect children above the age limit from harmful work. It is time to recognise that this 1973 ILO Convention 183 on the “Minimum Age” amounts to discrimination against children, has been superseded by the 1999 ILO Convention 182 on the “Worst Forms” (Bourdillon et al. 2014). A banning of child work based on age stems from western traditions and notions about childhood and the history of child exploitation following the industrial revolution (Bourdillon et al. 2010). A more enlightened approach is found in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child that recognised that children have responsibilities as well as rights and states that children in addition to the right to protection have the responsibility to assist their parents and elders and community in need (article 31) (Pankhurst et al. 2015).

Guday and Eshetu from the Department of Social Anthropology examine the mechanisms used in Fogera to bypass the legal minimum age of marriage and to perpetuate the practice of child marriage. The research, incorporating interesting case studies and interview transcripts, shows how the practice of child marriage subsisted across three generations with minor modifications apparently becoming more prevalent. Rather than disappearing the custom went underground with households arranging marriages under the cover of other social events such that the prohibition led to unintended negative outcomes since it went against engrained traditions and local values. In a way, the chapter is a confirmation of Daniel and Solomon’s argument that childhood and what it entails should be seen as contextual and culturally determined.

In contrast to children’s agency in the former chapter what Guday and Eshetu’s chapter underscores is prevailing cultural frames that view children instrumentally depriving them of autonomy and agency. For those interested in the law, the chapter also shows how a truly functioning “law”(the “living law”) operates or rather fails to operate in the face of the ingenuity of those whose behavior it purports to govern, when they are not convinced about the rationale of the law and are motivated by social norms and cultural notions. Guday and Eshetu argue that there is much that needs to be done to improve the efficacy of the (formal) law in its implementation. However, this case reveals a disconnect between a global logic enshrined in legal provisions to

prohibit child marriage and local notions of child protection. For parents living in rural Ethiopia marrying off their children soon after puberty is seen as a local form of child protection particularly for daughters. This avoids the perceived risks of pre-marital sex as adolescents become sexually active and the consequent risks of pre-marital pregnancy in the absence of contraception access for teenagers, sometimes leading to unsafe abortion, or having a child out of wedlock often resulting in risks of repudiation by the child's father or early divorce, ostracism of the young women by her families, generally curtailing a young woman's opportunities for education and meaningful work as she then has to bring up children on her own (Boyden et al. 2013). In a context of low life expectancy, absence of pensions and social security parents also want to see their daughters cared for and looked after and wish to have grandchildren who can help look after them in old age. We therefore see a clash of local norms with international standards and legislation that outlaws child marriage which has been followed in Ethiopia and enshrined in the Constitution and supported by the Family and Criminal codes and the Harmful Traditional Practices Policy (Pankhurst 2014).

The real task, however, should be directing at addressing the structures perpetuating child marriage and transforming social norms in ways that win the hearts and minds of people living in local communities, by involving girls, their parents, boyfriends and prospective husbands, community and religious leaders, as well as schools, health extension workers, youth and women's groups (Jones et al. 2015). Such an approach is likely to be more effective than strict legal enforcement and punishments for offenders which tends to lead to the practices going underground as Guday and Eshetu's chapter clearly demonstrates. Rather than a narrow focus on child marriage the debate should be widened to look into promoting alternatives for adolescents, involving not just access to reproductive health but improving their opportunities for education, work, employment and migration and seeking to expand opportunities beyond child marriage for girls to facilitate youth transitions to adulthood (Pankhurst 2014).

The chapter by Belay and Matewos from the School of Psychology moves the discussion from childhood and children to those in charge of children – to parents and, more specifically, to step-parents. Knowingly or unwittingly, the family environment of children is assumed to be formed by a happily married biological father and mother. The model nuclear family, however is increasingly under threat and takes diverse mutations. Researching the psychological well-being of children living with their step-parents, the chapter shows the challenges a full realization of the rights of children faces in light of

the inability of the model “nuclear family” to sustain itself. These mutations are hardly noticed by policy and law makers unless they amount to the total elimination of the family structure. Thus, children living without families are deservedly paid attention in policy, child rights and child welfare circles. Those living in families reconstituted along traditional models of a husband and a wife and children where a spouse is not biologically related to the child or children of the other spouse, however, do not seem to cause much concern. In the context in Ethiopia where family formations are often more complex, with not just sometimes three generation families, but also breakup of families, and their reconstitution due to death of a parent, divorce and separation, remarriage, adoption and step-relations are not uncommon. The assumption that nuclear biological families are the norm is definitely incongruent not only with the fact that such families are widely prevalent, but also because, at least in Ethiopia, cultural frames are such that step-parents are generally viewed as cruel and abusive towards their step-children.

The chapter suggests that step-children have lower support and have lower support and psychological wellbeing than children living with biological parents. It is noteworthy that very term connoting step relations in Amharic refers to *injera*, the staple flat-bread, which is symbolic of nourishment and survival but perhaps not caring and nurturing. The chapter suggests that shortcomings observable in step-parent - step-child relations can be alleviated to a degree through legislatively specifying the responsibilities of step-parents and by enhancing their parenting skills. Based on these, the chapter makes specific policy and legislative recommendations to ensure that children living with step-parents get the nurturing family environment they are entitled to. The authors also point out that children may suffer during the process of divorce and separation and while living in single parent households. However, very often poverty is an over-riding aspect of the reconfiguration of households and may be far more important in understanding vulnerabilities that whether children are orphans or live in step-families (Crivello and Chuta 2012; Pells 2012).

In the three chapters discussed so far, one cannot help but notice how poverty leads to, or at least exacerbates, the challenges faced in the realization of the rights of children. The insidiousness of poverty in relation to the rights and welfare of children, however, is not merely limited to the enjoyment (or lack thereof) of resource intensive social and economic rights. Neither is it limited only to those currently living under poverty. Poverty is the one major factor that in fact trumps the two cardinal principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – those of equality and non-discrimination. Its impact thus extends to all rights that the child is entitled to under the Convention. Poverty also tends to reproduce and perpetuate itself as those deprived of resources will pass on their deprivations to their offspring.

In their contribution, Assefa and Habtamu from the Department of Economics examine the effects of different factors on childhood poverty – factors that may alleviate or exacerbate childhood poverty therefore allowing a break from or continuing the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next. Using data from the Young Lives Project, they apply statistical and econometric analysis to determine the relative strength of household and community factors, as well as factors specific to individual children, in affecting variables that are indicative of a break in the intergenerational transmission of poverty. These variables were the physical wellbeing of children of preschool age and the cognitive abilities of children of primary school age. The authors' analysis demonstrated that what are referred to as “household factors” play a significant role in determining wellbeing and cognitive abilities providing further proof to the insidiousness and reproduction of poverty. Their conclusion is therefore that the efficacy of measures at addressing poverty depends on their ability to alleviate household poverty.

However, poverty needs to be understood as multi-dimensional and can be understood at different levels from the country through regions, to communities, households and individuals and is related to different forms of livelihood, as well as types of communities, households and people (Pankhurst and Bevan 2007, Bevan and Pankhurst 2008). While Assefa and Habtamu rightly stress the importance of “household factors”, community differences are also crucial in the opportunities and constraints on children and have been changing with the rapidly increasing pace of development in Ethiopia (Pankhurst and Tiumelissan 2013; Bevan et al. 2014). Furthermore as children move into adolescent and begin path of their transition to adulthood individual factors, and in particular gender, increasingly play a greater part in shaping the opportunities and constraints on their lives and interacts with poverty and other factors in more complex ways (Bevan 2011, Camfield and Tafero 2011, Feeny and Crivello 2015, Pells 2011).

Overall, the chapters included in this book examine the experiences of children and their implications for our understanding of the principles and rules of the Convention. They raise important issues about how global standards relate to realities on the ground leading us to appreciate the complexities involved in realizing these principles and rules in ways which take account of children's experiences and aspirations and enable the transformation of local norms and values in a period of rapid transformation and globalization.

Through their recommended measures to improve the state of children and to better respect their rights in Ethiopia, the chapters demonstrated the possibilities of using the Convention to drive the research agenda and interrogate local realities regarding children's wellbeing within different academic disciplines. Besides this, however, there is a subtext, sometimes emphatically stated, that runs through all chapters. This is the

crucial importance of putting children at the center, not only of the research, but also of the policy agenda. As a corollary to this, the chapters can also be seen as empirically informed calls to pay attention to the lived experiences, to acknowledging the agency and to incorporate the voices of children.

We believe that the chapters have contributed to meeting the objectives the Center sets for the book. We are grateful for all the authors whose work is published in the book as well as to those who responded to the initial call to take part in the book. We would like to thank W/t Elshaday Kifle, the former Head of the Center for Human Rights, for embracing the idea of the book and supporting it throughout her tenure, and Dr. Taye Asseffa whose impeccable job of copy preparation and proofing goes well beyond the call of duty. We also appreciate the financial support of Save the Children International and the patience and encouragement of its staff for the realization of this book.

We hope that this collection will inspire further critical research that questions taken for granted assumptions and engenders a fruitful dialogue between global legal regimes and local cultural norms in ways that promote the rights and wellbeing of children.

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Street Work and the Experiences of Children: Perspectives from Dilla Town, Southern Ethiopia

Daniel Gebretsadik and Solomon Mulugeta

Abstract

Based mainly on an in-depth and multifaceted qualitative study of 24 purposely selected street working children in Dilla town, Southern Ethiopia, this study attempts to shed light on children's use of streets as places of work, survival, socialization, play, learning and growth. The findings of the study show that the main factors that force children to work on the streets include poverty of parents or guardians, large family size, family disintegration, death of parents or guardians due to HIV/AIDS, erosion of the capabilities of extended family systems to look after needy children, prevailing cultural values and practices regarding parenting, child labor and children's education, the resilience of street working children in the faces of adversity and the inability of the existing child- focused socio-cultural, legal and institutional interventions to effectively address the plight of street working children. As regards work, the children's choices of means of survival are based largely on the nature of their perceived rewards of what they do considering risks, uncertainties, constraints and opportunities. Children see street work as a source of livelihood, evidence of agency, informal schooling, sense of responsibility, and sphere of socialization. The study also shows that the discourse that views street working children as 'out of place' and 'outside childhood' is concerned more with defending the values of the writers rather than defending the real interests of the children involved. In a nutshell children's responsibilities for themselves and towards their families force them not only to be found at 'wrong places' but also to engage in 'wrong careers'. Children want freedom and play, but they also want responsibility and respect for what they do and who they are, and work can bring both.

Key Words: Ethiopia, children, poverty, street work, social network.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

There can be no certainty as to the exact number of children working on the streets of the world today. Even though there is a general understanding among scholars that the real figures might be disturbingly high, lack of statistical data makes their estimate speculative. As recent estimates indicate, 100-150 million children have taken to the streets for survival and are solely relying on street work as their source of livelihood. For some, these children are part of the background of city life while for others they live in the foreground. Some have accepted street (working) children as part of the urban landscape considering that some of the activities they engage in enhance the functioning of urban areas. Others have tended to ignore their presence thereby making the children invisible. In the eyes of these members of the society, street (working) children are mostly considered either as at 'risk' or 'as' risks and their very presence contradicts discourses on family values, ideas about public order and what it means to be a 'child'. Streets are primarily associated with deviance and delinquency, exposing children to the loss of childhood innocence (Nieuwenhuys 2003). Children working on street contradict normative assumption of modern childhood as a work free phase of the life course (Ennew 2002). Their use of streets as a place for work is misunderstood by different actors whose views of childhood converge with western ideals of domesticity. As long as the children compete with other powerful elements within the urban contours, their presence is what becomes problematic, but not the complexity of the contexts the children live in.

Thinking about how street involved children should be regarded within policy and programs has a recent origin as it evolved over the last few decades. In recent years, there have been significant developments in thinking about street (working) children, one significant enough to Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) to write in terms of paradigm shift in our understanding. For long, street working children have been viewed as helpless and vulnerable victims, those who, in the words of Conolley and Ennew (1996), 'are risky', 'gone outside childhood' and 'disrupt the normality of social life'. However, from this view of street working children, Conolley and Ennew point to an emerging transformation in which diversity of interests and perspectives enjoys a common recognition that street working children are actively engaged in the negotiation and construction of their daily lives. Such shift in thinking contains important implications for our approach to street working children at a level of theory, research and policy. It not only brings to the fore the need to take seriously street working children's own efforts to shape their circumstances and exercise control over their lives, but also raises the concern that street working children have a pivotal role to play in the establishment of

realistic interventions. Thus, our concern about street working children should be framed within the terms of demonstration of agency and resilience rather than within the mere discussion of their vulnerability (Boyden and Maan 2005).

Children and Street Work in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, children are at the centre of societal interactions and economic functioning. Child work is a way of life and contributing to family wellbeing through work is a long-standing feature of most families. Ethiopian culture dictates strong work ethics from an early age. Despite all the difficulties they face, children make valuable contributions to social and economic (re)production of societies (Alebachew 2009). The Ethiopian culture encourages children to work to develop skills that are useful for their future adult role. Children are considered as assets especially among the poverty-stricken families, and many work on the streets either to contribute to the wellbeing of their families (Verhoef 2005) or, in the worst case, to provide for their own welfare (Ennew 2005). However, although the importance of the work of children is widely recognized, most reports document children's work too exclusively from a narrow 'child labor' orientation, thus missing many of the important livelihood questions. There is interest in questioning normative statements (supposed certainties and judgments) about child work and childhood. There is a need to show the variety of meanings work has and can have for children. This aspect has been hitherto neglected, despite the frequent invocation of children's rights.

In Ethiopia, literature on the lives of working children is strangely absent. This has not gone without comment and Aptekar and Abebe (1997) have pointed to the enduring influence of a psychopathological model, in which children turn to the street or go 'out of place' for delinquent purpose, a definition widely held in the literature in the global north and that has affected policy formulation in many countries in the global south, including Ethiopia. It is these 'dislocated' children (Burman 1994) who, as Boyden (1994) notes, sit uneasily within accepted conventions of children as (innocent) victims of circumstances and marginalization. The tendency to consider street (working) children either as 'at risk' or 'as' risks and, the proclivity to make a distinction between 'runaways and throwaways' do not permeate policies that ostensibly aim at improving the existential conditions of children working on the streets. In fact, such children are commonly viewed as taking to the streets for pathological reasons, rather than for reasons that have to do with exploiting the possibilities for work and income that the streets alone could offer. Even though working on the streets exposes children to physical and emotional vulnerabilities, it also promotes the processes of empowerment through which they exercise their agency and develop innovative livelihood strategies. However, the attempts made thus far to rehabilitate conventional understanding of the culture and values of street working

children have largely failed to pay attention to their livelihoods. It can be argued that contemporary ideas about children's work are framed by adult perceptions of what they think children are doing.

Street work has long been a source of livelihood for many children growing up in urban Ethiopia. Children are seen working in large numbers in streets and sprawling open market places in many towns of Ethiopia. Their presence becomes obvious as soon as one steps into any urban area and this phenomenon has already raised both public and private concerns. In Ethiopia, calls have been made to ensure that children are accorded greater safeguards and protection from work because they constitute Ethiopia's only real hope for a great future. Statements such as this seem to suggest that allowing children to work in any form is totally unacceptable and that especially street working children are at a great disadvantage. Nonetheless, it is important to take note of the fact that this view has not been left entirely unchallenged. Such views are marked by a "high moral tone" (Liebel 2004) and do not seem to give the whole picture especially from the perspectives of those involved (Okoli 2009). Thus, while many tend to argue that street work is not in children's best interests some others see children's involvement in street work as an integral part of their livelihood process. It was actually the existence of such a debate that prompted our interest and desire to explore the lives of street working children. Thus, it is hoped that the findings of this study could shed some light on the nature and implications of working on the streets both from the perspectives of street children and the adults with whom they are interacting on a day by day basis.

Research on Street Working Children and Research Gaps

In Ethiopia, the working children phenomenon has attracted a limited attention of researchers in the recent past. The few publications that these studies yielded have, nonetheless, contributed considerably towards narrowing the noticeably wide gap in the research literature. Some of the most important works in this regard include a study on child domestic workers in Addis Ababa (Kifle 2002), the lives of working children in selected Ethiopian towns (Veale 1993), lives of working children in Addis Ababa (Aptekar and Abebe 1997), and a study on young men and their sexuality, and its implications for the spread of HIV/AIDS in a town in north-central Ethiopia (Getnet 2006). In his cross-cultural research, Woodhead (1998) also assess the perception of working children about their working lives. Woodhead concludes that working children are "active participants; not passive victims" in the relationships and activities that shape their well-being and development. In an equally important study, Poluha (2004) examines the place of children in the mainstream society (home, family, and politics) taking formal school system as a point of departure. She concludes that schools become sites that reproduce existing forms of authority and social inequalities. As a result, children in school contexts are

socialized into a 'hierarchy trap'. Other research works have also examined the socio-spatial mobility of girls in relation to commercial sex work and HIV/AIDS epidemic (van Blerk 2007; Hoot et al. 2007) and the impact of HIV/AIDS epidemic on orphans and how orphans negotiate care and reciprocity along with extended family households (Abebe and Aase 2007). Recently, an article by Tatek (2009) has explored the socio-spatial experiences of street child beggars in Addis Ababa and underscored the fluid or transient nature of begging in the children's lives. These studies provide valuable insights into the significance of work for children and young people to obtain life-sustaining necessities and contribute to the wellbeing of their respective families.

One important phenomenon that needs to be borne in mind while mentioning studies on working children in Ethiopia is the fact that most of these works place little attention on street working children who, as a group, have become a visible, persistent and integral component of the urban social fabric in the country. Some research works concentrate on 'troubled street childhood' where they focus on discussion of vulnerability of street (working) children considering them either as at 'risk' or 'as' risks rather than on 'resourceful street childhood' in which the agency and resilience of street working children is emphasized. Children are mostly viewed as taking to the streets for pathological reasons. In other words, this means that they either fail to see or intentionally disregard the fact that most children take to the streets to exploit the possibilities for work and income that streets alone offer. Street working life not only involves vulnerability, but also processes of empowerment through which children exercise their personal agency and develop ways through which to cope with adversities. It can be argued that contemporary ideas about the lives of street working children are framed by Euro-centric, adult perceptions and definitions of what they think street working children are doing, and that the imposition of western constructions of childhood does not reflect the lived realities of the children. We challenge the unitary line of research that merely concentrates on vulnerable childhood (Tatek 2008).

Shifts in Thinking about Children

Shift from 'objects of concern' to 'subjects of rights'

Academic works with street children have moved away from a discourse that categorized them as children in need and emphasized their weaknesses and dependency or considered them either as at 'risk' or 'as' risks, to acknowledging instead the positive aspects of their lives. By so doing, they have cautioned against the construction of a unitary 'street child model' that fails to draw attention to children's own voices as citizens and their capabilities as agents of change (e.g. Hecht 2000; Ennew and Stewart-Kruger 2003). The emphasis has thus moved from highlighting the *needs* of vulnerable children to

defending their *rights* as citizens. As a result, there has been a shift in our thinking in the recent past. Now there is a growing understanding of children as citizens (Earls and Carlson 1999). The idea that they are simply immature creatures whose needs must be met by parents or other charitably inclined adults is becoming obsolete. As citizens, children have rights that entitle them to the resources required to protect and promote their livelihood and development. The rights discourse is concerned with a measured consideration of children's capabilities. It appreciates children as individuals with specific competences and maturity. It also emphasizes the need to discern and adopt those behaviors that, realistically, will improve children's quality of life. To make child rights contingent upon capacity is problematic, especially when adults remain the all-powerful judges of their competencies. But, we have to remember that acknowledging children's rights and listening to their perspectives is essential to ensure that their voices make an effective contribution to shaping their future.

Shift from 'passive receivers of life' to 'agents of change'

Another significant shift of emphasis was to recognize that promoting the best interests of children is not just a matter of protecting and providing children with the material support they deserve, but of listening to them and fostering child participation. There is a careful balance to be struck between the three broad categories of rights in the Convention: rights to protection, provision, and participation. Adults emphasize the first two rights (rights to protection and provision) while remaining reluctant to the third right (participatory rights where participation of children in matters that directly affect them is emphasized). The participatory rights recognize that children are agents of change in their own lives, which call for demands that adults recognize that children have agency and manifest social competency (shaping their lives for themselves). A wide array of empirical research shows that children have a variety of abilities and competencies and are not merely passive receivers of life and culture (Punch 2003). As active agents, children belong to the same world of economics and politics as adults; they can negotiate relationships, make decisions and influence situations in which they live and grow (Woodhead 1998). Portrayals of street working children 'as' risk or 'at' risk also have an impact on types of intervention (Ennew 1995). Interventions focused on removing street working children from the streets milieu could not provide lasting solutions because they tend to ignore children's own views and all that they have already done for themselves. Children have social agency and competency and are capable of making informed decisions about their lives (Ennew 1995). We need to stress that street (working) children are not objects of concern; they are subjects of right.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical data used in this study was gathered through repeated periods of fieldwork carried out in 2013/14 with street working children and their families in Dilla town, Sothern Ethiopia. Children formed the core of this study in two main ways, i.e., as participants in the research and as the focus of the study. This is a qualitative study and is concerned with day-to-day relationships, perspectives and interpretations of children based on their lived experiences. Knowledge is socially constructed, and it varies historically over time and differs across cultural groups that hold diverse beliefs about human development and nature. We chose this framework (which is a constructivist approach) for the study because it helps to conceptualize the children's' personal stories, experiences, desires and their ways of looking at working and/or living on the streets from the insider's perspective, as impacted by the social and historical factors which are unique to them. In Dilla, many children work on the streets to provide for themselves and contribute to the wellbeing of the families to which they belong. Thus, out of the rather large number of street working children, a total of only 24 children (aged 9 to 17 years) were purposively selected to participate in the study by using snowball sampling method. The respondents were then purposely given hypothetical names so that the information that they provided may never be used against them by any one.

No single method is suitable to counteract the issue of unequal power relationships, nor is it possible to capture the entire complexity and variety of children's lives in and through space and time (Young and Barrett 2001; Punch 2002). Based on this understanding we have employed a combination of various data collection approaches in order to gather the relevant primary and secondary data. The specific methods that we used then provided us with the opportunity to allow the children to have a more direct say and impressively fruitful participation in the study in line with the CRC principle (Article 12 of the Convention). The key data collection methods that we used in this regard included semi-participant observation and informal dialogue (which aimed at identifying participants for the research, building up friendship and trust with them, acquiring adequate knowledge of their everyday routines as well as understanding the informal knowledge and embodied practices that sustain them). We also used in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and story writing (which were meant to understand the dynamics of the children's working lives), photo diaries (meant to re-create street working children's daily life process and spatial patterns), and household visits (to document household assets through observation and dialogues with children or adults). These methods were used to collect the relevant data for this study based on and guided by the understanding that ethics is central to research involving children. Thus, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were the hallmarks of this study.

STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reasons behind the street working children phenomenon

All things considered it in fact appears that household poverty is the single most important reason behind the proliferation of children working on the streets of urban Ethiopia. This study provides a useful debate on this issue. The intensive fieldwork that was conducted to collect data for this research has led to a better understanding of the realities, and in doing so, has prompted the writers to question the ‘economic poverty narrative’. The involvement of children in street work is seldom due to one event. In fact, as the results of this study suggest, it is usually the interplay of various closely related factors that create the conditions that cause children to be involved in street work. These factors include dysfunctional families (related to divorce or separation, alcoholism and violence, erosion of traditional pattern of child care), large-scale rural to urban migration, problems associated with the inabilities to maintain large families, cultural values regarding child labor, the HIV/AIDS pandemic (increase of child-headed households) and the resilience of street working children (which largely emanates from the companionship, mutual understanding and support of children working on the streets). These conditions not only create the spiral of vulnerability that explains why children work on the street, but also involves the processes of empowerment through which children exercise their personal agency. It can be argued that these economic and non-economic factors should not be treated as ‘either/or’ groups into which they can be neatly divided but rather as ‘more or less’ dimensions along which street (child) work can be properly understood. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the decisive role played by non-economic factors in children’s decision to work on the street are not yet carefully thought out.

Children’s experiences of street work

The phenomenon of children working on the street can begin in different ways. Children may start street work as an opportunity for play. Nonetheless, children’s entry into the world of street work as a means of survival is the most recurrent one. Street children often use the urban public space for economic purposes though differently. During the field work, shoe-shining, fixed and itinerant vending, portaging, scavenging and begging were identified as the major street activities of children in Dilla town. The streets were free and open to anybody who wanted to do something in order to earn some income; there were no restrictions on what to work, where to work or who to work for. In relation to choosing what they work, the majority of children exercised flexibility and freedom (took responsibility for what they work), though to some extent with friends or parental approval, supervision and sponsorship. Uniformity of work engendered sensible competition because the children had commitment towards goal attainment. To many

children, their livelihoods depended on the types of work in which they were involved and how much money they made from it. Achieving the daily target demands hard work and ingenuity. Out of their ingenuity children and their group members devise their own ways of reaching their daily targets, in a mutually interdependent manner negotiating and renegotiating with social and structural constraints and opportunities within the street environment. They are capable of negotiating opportunities and constraints according to their ability and unique circumstances.

Spatial implications of street work

Street working children are highly spatially organized and their spatial organization is highly strategic. During the process of street adaptation, children's relationship with place changes, and they become better able to transform unknown urban public spaces into working zones. For these children, urban public space becomes progressively safer to explore, easier to understand and more predictable. The children linked their ability to get by to their ability to move around the town. Moving around is associated with being active, making something of oneself, going places and acquiring knowledge and skills. These movements are also a strategy to seek adventure, to gain access to social networks that are necessary for survival or as a means for avoiding problems or escaping difficult situations. In street work, constant adjustment and creativeness is needed. The ability to make income requires connections to friends, customers, knowledge of strategic places to work, and an ability to predict changes in demand and supply. Emeka (14) talked about his experiences of street work, emphasizing the value of geographical knowledge in doing street work and meeting the daily target. This is what he said:

Each day, I think of how I can make some money by the end of the day. I do not sit in one particular place for long time. I always move from one part of the street to another in order to increase the chance of having more work and getting more income. Street activities such as vending, portaging, scavenging and begging demand geographical mobility and knowledge of strategic places to operate. You see! Spatially specific control of the urban environment mostly limits where one can access opportunities. Children also move to seek adventure, to avoid problems or escape difficult situations.

As indicated by Crang (1998), the interaction of the social relations at a particular time and space allows individuals to develop a sense of belonging. For street working children, attachments to specific niches within the town enable them to reassert their belonging and position in society by creating a sense of place through personal feelings and attachments (Beazley 2000). This sense of place is important for street children's identity as it allows them to develop spatially within the town. Moving across urban public space not only affects the spaces children interact through but also the relationships they engage in,

shaping their identities in relation to the spatial and temporal dimensions of the life path. Moving across urban public space is not only important to access “a wider customer base”, “for seizing or widening working opportunities”, “to look for new adventures”, “to escape difficult situations” but also for “creating and sustaining the social relations” on which street working children are highly dependent. Access to the resources needed for day-to-day living and social mobility is often gained through networks which are complex, built on the principles of obligation and sympathy. The children claimed that whether someone is successful in street working life or not depends in part on knowledge of the urban public space and in part on “whom one knows”, or the social contacts he or she can capitalize on.

Children’s Perceptions of Street Work

Source of livelihood

In urban areas, people live in an entirely money-based economy. In this context, everything requires money (Heinonen 2013). Children resort to income generating activities so as to afford their cost of living. They hold the view that ‘street work should be appreciated as necessary for wellbeing of the children involved and their respective families’. Without working on the street, most of these children would plunge into abject poverty with negative ramifications for their wellbeing. It is needless to stress that street work can improve the resources that are available for survival. In their attempt to explain the meaning of work, the children emphasized that ‘work means earning money and making a livelihood’. Some defined work as ‘a practiced activity which gives meaning to someone’s life’. ‘It is an activity from which one makes a living and uses as a source of livelihood’. ‘It refers to tasks children do for the general maintenance of the family unit or as part of the normal run of socialization’. Many aptly capture this view in their definition of work as ‘anything someone does that will make that person survive...like something that enables someone get money or make a livelihood’. Emeka (14) was one of those who made ambivalent claims that street work was benign because income from street work helped to sustain his family and kept him in school. Many believed that their work opened up livelihood choices they would not otherwise have. Zena (17) explained shoe shining as follows:

I feel that that shoe shining is a normal activity that has to do with the need for meeting the basics of life or contributing to household income. Look! This activity is mostly justified in the eyes of many children in urban settings as it has no harm to children who would otherwise suffer even more due to the deep rooted poverty of their family. Children living in poverty need to work; they need to help themselves; they need to support their poor families. This is what I am doing.

Children in Ethiopia perform various productive activities as a contribution to the survival strategies of the households in which they form an active part. Children's help with domestic chores is highly valued, and parents consider it children's social responsibility to contribute to the wellbeing of their families (Verhoef 2005). Street working children often appreciate their working lives, and the social benefits they derive from street work. The children in the study surprised the researchers with their positive attitude to their street activities: "we liked to work", "it made us feel useful and important", "We would be worse off if we did not work" were some of the ideas that street working children interviewed for this study expressly stated. Children working on the street are involved in various street activities to make a living. The children were proud of their work roles and the financial gain they brought. The children did not feel ashamed of the work they did in public. They always think about their lives and also feel responsibility towards their family's stressful material situations. The responses of the children the principal researcher worked with confirm children's struggle to cope with their livelihood constraints. The children call themselves "resilient people" and feel a sense of duty to use their earnings to sustain or help out their parents.

Evidence of agency

A traditional approach to child welfare presents poor children as victims of poverty whose well-being is dependent on the intervention of others (see Bessell 2007). However, new social studies of childhood has prompted a rethinking of such assumptions and highlighted children's agency (Levison 2000; James and James 2001). Children make choices even in situations characterized by poverty and abuse. Seen from the point of view of agency and resilience, children's work may bring experiences of participation, contribution and even empowerment. Children need both protection and opportunities to show responsibility for themselves and others. In the child work discourse, children, through their participation in productive activities, find means of contributing to their own welfare and that of others (Woodhead 1999; Leonard 2004; Bourdillon 2006). Children's understanding and explanations about street work were not only based on ideas about livelihood, but also about agency and resilience. The children interviewed for this research felt some sense of control over their lives, including control over when and how they make money. They always thought actively about the work they did on the streets. For Mamitu (13), selling *kollo*, lemon and boiled potato for her mother was not only a personal choice and pleasurable experience but also an opportunity to get respect for her knowledge, skill and social competence. The children the principal researcher worked with let him know that they were time conscious, which is an example of their presentation of agency and resilience. The following response of Zena (17), demonstrates this better:

I like what I am doing! Nobody forced me to do it! I came here with my hands and legs. I do shoe shining for myself and I like it. I also know many children who work on the street to help their parents or relatives. Many children are able to redefine and strengthen their position within their families. They make career choices and decisions on their behalf. They are really strong and capable. I have no problem with my work on the street, it [shoe shining] is moving well.

Mamitu (13) works on the street at different times of the day but does not consider herself involved in valuable work and it is her duty to help her family [her mother and four siblings]. She further explained that the income from vending added value to her impoverished family and their family showed her kindness and appreciated her efforts. On the other hand, Zena (17) was doing shoe shining for himself and he liked it, because he himself chose to do it. At this juncture, two things matter: skills the child demonstrates and the status that this activity earns. The child wants to gain proceeds, but also to demonstrate skills. What the experiences of Mamitu and Zena tell us is that children could have a positive link with street work and that this is defined thanks to the skills which enable them make incomes in a work recognized as useful. The euphemism used by child beggars in considering their activity as work illustrates how they seek to develop a sense of normality in what they do. They seek to (re)construct a positive self-identity. In doing so, they also defend their activity as legitimate and productive that generates money based on effort. Mamitu feels that she is doing valuable work because she gets recognition as a working child. Although we cannot say that the children were fully competent in every respect, we would argue that they exercised agency. Work enhanced their control over their day-to-day choices and over major life decisions. This suggests that there is no 'one size fits all' approach; in no case could these children totally be considered 'dependants' (Daniel 2015). Policies that merely conceive them as family collectives are likely to miss the mark.

Opportunity for informal learning

As the children argue, it is difficult to replace the learning function of work by the overture of formal system of education, which is usually conducted away from the social environments in which the children live most of their lives (Alebachew 2009). For instance, Zena (17) regarded shoe shining as valuable child work, and gave the reason: "I am learning how to work and give the change to people". He added, "The street work is not as detrimental a place as it is mostly perceived; streets are like schools...we are learning something useful, we are learning how to do business". Referring to what he learned through his work [vending] and from the adults that he worked with, Paulos (14) said that he had much to learn to be successful in the future. Mulunesh (15) was unable to attend school earlier when she was new to the town and must work to survive. But, during

the time of data collection she was attending evening school at the nearest public school but indicated that she could no longer continue her education. Her plan was actually to expand her business rather than spend more time at school. Mulunesh is optimistic about her future. According to her, children are entitled to education but this does not necessarily mean that attending available formal schools is a priority. One could learn so many things through working and with little formal schooling (Alebachew 2009). Mulunesh (15) conceptualized work as informal schooling and she gave the reason for it:

My work is teaching me a lot. I am gaining knowledge and developing my skills. Every day I meet so many people who share with me their work and life experiences and tell me about good and bad things including business. I have customers of all sorts - students, teachers, business people, farmers, and all these share with me their life experiences.... I consider my street corner café as a school where I learn many things. It is a benefit for me.

Many of the children whom the principal researcher met and talked to indicated that they regarded their street work not merely as a source of their livelihoods but also as an opportunity for learning and developing a set of 'professional' skills. They argued that working on the streets exposes them to learning opportunities. In addition to the benefits street work brings to their families, any street activity that bestows positive values like knowledge acquisition, skills development, and competencies for making changes for the better in their lives could be viewed as work, despite the difficulties and risks involved. Besides, these skills and street work were embraced as signs of competence, and mastery over the forms and demands of urban living. In fact, it was very easy to crosscheck what Mulunesh reported. The principal researcher tried to look at the customers' profile. He personally witnessed that Mulunesh had customers of all sorts (students, teachers, business people, farmers, and so on) and they always made lively discussions and debates on a wide range of issues from local business, agriculture, religion, music, sport, urbanization, globalization, and politics (Alebachew 2009). The diversity of goods displayed by the road sides and the openness and accessibility of the streets allow customers of all sorts and varying interests to share their experiences and opinions with the vendors. It is clear that the street as a site is not only a place of work but also a locus of societal interaction. It is also a place which offers a degree of opportunity, a sense of entitlement, relative freedom and independence and opportunity for informal learning. Like most children, Mesa (15) enjoyed street work [portaging] because it offered him opportunities of meeting important personalities, gathering information and learning about events ahead of others.

A symbol of responsibility

In Ethiopia, children's work typically starts with light personal domestic chores at a very young age. This can extend in their early teens to the domestic tasks that adults do, especially for children whose parents are dead, absent, or incapacitated. As children grow, work may extend outside the home. Starting with domestic work, which can involve menial tasks, children often find their identity and position in their family through their work, and can use it to negotiate a degree of autonomy. Children could maintain good relation with adults in their families through their contribution. There was a common agreement that submission to parental demands and societal expectations were an essential part of being a good child. Findings from the data show that most children accept their role as "workers" because they make contributions to their vulnerable households. Further, the children clearly articulate their roles in and responsibilities to the family and all of them recognize their contributions as important for the functioning of their respective family. In addition to the material grounds for working, as indicated earlier, some children alluded to the moral imperative of being dependent on their friends or parents, and of not sharing their financial resources upon returning home. Particularly, in case where their parents are so deprived, children involve in various productive activities as a contribution to the survival of the family in which they form an active part. They also make effort to improve their own livelihood through the street activities they are involved in. Mentosha (16) was begging on the day he was interviewed by the principal researcher. He reported that he decided to "do business" [begging] because of the difficult economic conditions which his mother was facing. The following are the words that he used to explain the situation:

My father is a metal worker. He gets a good sum of money, but he spends it out with his friends. He does not give my mother money even to pay the house rent. Our mother has no work. When I see that she is stressed, I go out and do some business [beg]. She blesses me because I am doing this to help her and myself. I do not like going back home without having some money to provide. For me, simply to sit and wait for my weak mother to feed me is [morally] unacceptable. So, I always go out and beg or find something to work at and earn some money.

For many, street work is a source of pride as children do it cognizant of their families' economic circumstances that make their street work necessary. Most children working on the streets carry significant responsibilities. Most of them feel strongly accountable to their families. The words of Mentosha illustrate how children's feelings of responsibility towards their family's stressful material situations force them to participate in income-generating activities. Children recognize that their contribution plays a pivotal role in sustaining their family's livelihoods. In fact, the earnings they take home may serve the

purposes of buying food, paying house rent or ensuring that there are sufficient resources to run household economies smoothly. Children work on the street and their reasons for working in part entails the moral question of their dependence on their parents, who struggle hard to make ends for the family meet (Tatek 2008). Mentosha's relationship with his mother is one of praise and appreciation, which in turn entails a sense of belongingness and solidarity at home. By contributing to their family's daily income, many children find that they are able to redefine and strengthen their position within their families. Mamitu (13) noted the following: 'it makes me feel that I am valuable and important and I can reduce the financial burden of my family'. Like Mamitu, interview with other street working children revealed that they feel proud and worthy, and that participation in family livelihoods builds their sense of confidence and self-reliance. This highlights the sense of responsibility within which children's own experiences of street work is embedded.

Sphere of socialization

Street working children interact with each other through multiple social networks and over the range of issues and concerns that constitute social life. The social opportunities of meeting people, making friends and being part of the attraction on the streets were among the reasons why children enjoyed street work. Many children reported enjoying aspects of work on the street. They reported that working and earning money gave them a sense of independence and that 'buying things they are in need of' made them feel good. The children also expressed pleasure and gratitude in aspects of their work that went beyond getting and spending money. Of course, "earning money" is the primary reason why children were happy while working in the streets. But there are also other reasons given such as "being together with friends." The experience of Kassu (12) and many others demonstrates that the involvement of children in street work creates social opportunities of meeting people, and making friends. Mamitu (13) adds that "work can be important for children to expand their relationship beyond home and family. It opens opportunities to enjoy the company of their peers in the work place and the experience of meeting adults in the context of work. It can also contribute to children having a place in society". From the words of the children that were interviewed for this study it has become reasonably clear to the writers that that working on the streets provides children with both social status and a means of socializing. The following words of Woldu (11) clearly show this:

You see! Here on the street we feel freedom that we do not experience at home. Street work allows children to expand their relationship beyond home and family. They always enjoy the company of peers on the street, and their experiences in the contexts of street work and begging are similar. Street working children want to feel solidarity with others

and with anyone who shares the same values and thoughts as themselves. Work provides children an opportunity to develop a feeling of belonging.

The children who participated in this study in general indicated that they liked the street works they were engaged in and reported that they were happy to work, even though the money they made was too little to meet all of their needs. Among the leading sources of their contentment with street work was found the solidarity that they enjoy with their peers and their respective families. Likewise, reasons related to learning and socialization appeared as important as those related to survival or contributing to family economy when it comes to the factors behind their happiness about working on the streets. Interestingly, their faces often beamed with enthusiasm when they spoke about their exciting social opportunities. Their enthusiasm and positive views about street working also stem from meeting and watching various people and events in the working arena, meeting friends and establishing new relationships, and more importantly, learning about events ahead of others. For many, the street as a working place was a “happening place” that provided continuous entertainment and sight-seeing. Emeka (14) likes street work because “There is always something to watch every day”. He alluded to hot exchanges and sometimes the fights between children, young and adults as entertaining and like many, he did not consider those as problems. Deme (12), Mebratu (13), Takel (10) and Amele (15) also spoke about the fights but discounted them as an integral part of the fun. They said that they enjoyed working in and around the street environment because “it is like a cinema” (Deme, 12); “that is why I like coming here as my way of working”, concurred Mebratu (13). In their views, streets provide social and learning opportunities, the goings-on provide them with things to discuss and laugh about in their small working groups and all of these things make working exciting and worthwhile. For the children, streets are spaces where they build their material and symbolic culture providing them with important social arenas for interaction with their peers and significant others.

Coping with Adversities

Consumption tuning and food reciprocity

As already pointed out, survival is one of the major denominators in the child’s street work. In this case, street work is characterized by a vision of economic activity as a means of survival and as a task that cannot be avoided. The most important thing I understand from the words of the children interviewed for this study was that the work they are doing does not always guarantee adequate livelihood and sometimes, they may be obliged to eke a hand-to-mouth life. This is what is indicated by the following words of Flelek (17):

I eat 3 times a day when I have enough money. But, sometimes I have to skip breakfast. Sometimes I do not have my breakfast until about 11 a.m. when I might have made appreciable income. If I failed to make appreciable income, I look for 'bule' [leftover] from hotels, restaurants and cafeterias. If this attempt is not successful, the last resort will be taking meals that are cheap in price and small, to reduce outlay from the limited income I made. I don't spend all that I earned. I have to be wise. I also borrow from my friends in times of scarcity.

Most of the children the principal researcher worked with eat three times a day when they can afford, but have to forgo a meal or two in a day when they do not have enough money. Such an experience is not predictable and what makes the problem even more serious is the fact that many of them have to keep a portion of their meager incomes as savings. Others depend on their friends or team up with them to contribute to the purchase or preparation of food. They often eat small quantity snacks mostly cheap in price such as biscuits, bread and a cup of tea and roasted grain (mostly for breakfast), bread with boiled cabbage, *injera* with *shiro* (mostly for lunch and dinner), which were usually available from small tea houses, street corner café's or bought from vendors around the working territory. Though buying from the street is expensive, these children find it relatively cheaper since a lot more is needed to cook one's own everyday meal. We use the term 'consumption tuning' to refer to modifications made in expenditure. The children purchase different kinds of food away from home on a daily basis and, on average, 20 percent of their daily income goes into purchasing street foods. The children always take time to think how much to earn and pay for a living (what to eat, what to pay for rent, what to save and what to remit to the family). Children always think about tomorrow and constantly adjust their food intake (mostly to the basic minimum) for the sake of saving which will be used to pay school fees as required, to get or improve working capital or serve during dismal conditions of life. Even when they make more money, the children do not want to change the existing pattern of their consumption expenditure. This is truly in line with the shift in thinking from "food first to livelihood first perspective" (Degefa 2005).

Sharing is a key concept in the lives of street working children and follows a specific code of conduct. Private property is highly respected; money earned belongs solely to the individual child. Food bought with money is also considered private though often shared at the discretion of the owner. On the other hand, food scavenged, particularly hotel and restaurant leftovers - commonly known as *bule* - are considered communal property and will be shared with whoever is around and willing to eat with them. In some instances, street working children can be seen racing towards newly arriving trucks either to load or unload their consignments and, in so doing, make some money which they can later use to buy cheap food from informal road side inns or food vendors. At other times they

can be seen squatting on pavements and eating together, while others still gather in and around their working places or near the doorways of shops sharing a meal. Participation in the group clearly widens the range of resources available to the individual street working child. This may be good for two reasons. First, scavenged foods appear to be shared communally. Second, through the principle of sharing, one can build up personal relations of reciprocity. With further analysis, such ties might be likened to some form of ‘risk reduction reciprocity’. Sharing was linked to competition for status and prestige. At times, when work is insufficiently rewarding, friends provide one of the few legitimate ways to get money or food. Mesa (15) remarked that, “If I’m not able to work and get money, some of the children I work with will buy food and then we all eat. If they don’t have and I have some money, I buy for them to eat”. Mentosha (17) articulates the importance of food reciprocity as the benefits that accrue from friends or advantage that flows between friends in ways that may buffer the worst extremes of food scarcity. In this way, the children actively cooperate to maintain an ‘adequate’ supply of food through the regular pooling of resources so as to guarantee one another a daily meal.

Subsistence saving

Many of the child participants had never had direct access to cash before they started working. They learned progressively how to make money and manage their expenses and how to take advantage of various livelihood opportunities. Financial asset is available to children in the form of savings and credit. In the early phases of working life, children tended to have minimal savings because of their limited experience in street work, the limited income they make, the household responsibilities they shoulder, and their lack of access to safe places to deposit their money. But, when the children develop work experience and build trusting relationships with people, they start saving. Many of the children save money on a weekly basis with individuals. They commonly deposited their money with two or three people at the same time as insurance against the risk of losing all their savings. These money-guards are friends, parents, elder brothers or sisters, shopkeepers, extended family members, social workers, religious leaders, chosen according to their reputation, accessibility and emotional proximity to the children. Long friendship, kinship linkages or relation created through religious affiliation are important, which is consistent with the findings of Rutherford (2000). Above all, mutual trust was the reason for choosing a money-guard. Saving has a gender dimension. Girls showed a tendency to save more than boys, when the same earning capacity was reported. As field data suggest, girls tend to put the interests of their families above their own, a phenomenon which is consistent with the findings of Nieuwenhuys (1994). It just seems that such a tendency has led the girls to develop a strong saving culture. Emeka (14) stressed this fact by saying the following:

Saving is one of the strategies I rely on to confront some of the challenges that I might face in the future as I try to work and survive. It enables me to cope with harsh conditions of life. If I have money saved, I will not be vulnerable. I also advised other street working children to save money with people they trusted. Actually, many street working children save money. They know the benefit of saving. If you have saved money you can play with it and use it to meet your needs. You can also send money to your family and help your brothers and sisters. This is not a simple matter. You have to be wise. Nowadays, financial security should come first.

The majority of the street working children that participated in the research save on a weekly basis through *Iqub* (dues are paid regularly, saved and then pay-outs are made on a lottery system). In the case of street working children, this social set-up, *Iqub*, is mainly formed on the basis of belonging to the same ethnic group or some other unifying factor by relying on verbal agreements, mutual trust and reciprocity. *Iqub* has an objective of accumulating money from the membership; it also helps to protect oneself from economic hardship and uncertainties, and enables members to support each other and maintain solidarity. Therefore, participating in *Iqub* is almost a norm for nearly all of the street working children that participated in this study. Most of the children that participated in the study deposit about 50 to 70 birr per person per week as partakers in *Iqub*, even though it seems difficult for them to meet their necessities with the birr that remains in their pockets. Most of them remain committed to *Iqub* by sacrificing their meals and other basic necessities. In times of scarcity, they borrow money from their friends and relatives to make good on the promises that they made to regularly deposit money as members of an *Iqub* and also to meet their immediate basic needs. This shows that the children entered into such a strong livelihood commitment not because they have money but because they see saving money with *Iqub* as the best way to cope with the many unpredictable life incidents that might challenge their survival in the foreseeable future and, in doing so they demonstrate greater resilience.

Livelihood diversification and flexibility

In Dilla, it was rare to identify children that exclusively depend on a single type of street activity for their survival. As a rule, many children attempt to combine two or more street activities to diversify their sources of income. These activity diversifications are undertaken as steps towards creating resilience and making the best out of the varying circumstances in which the children find themselves. Children undertake multiple activities concurrently in their daily struggles for survival. Some invest their capital in different kinds of street activities such as shoe shining and vending. Others combine activities such as portaging and scavenging or scavenging and begging by simply using their human asset – their labor and creativity. Although the children seem to settle with

one street career, they usually keep their options open for any other income generating activity. The children know that complementary activities have to be done on a regular basis whenever opportunities arise. This is because the money made from a particular regular activity may not be good enough to meet their daily needs. What is more, it may not be sustainable. Thus, the children mostly combine two or more street activities in order to diversify their sources of income and spread risks. Tamrat (16) said the following about livelihood diversification and flexibility:

Children diversify their sources of subsistence and follow different livelihood paths. They display considerable flexibility as regards the nature and timing what they do. Here [in street], many children construct a diverse portfolio of activities to earn more incomes. These income generating activities are undertaken either simultaneously or alternatively with one another. Diversification is a central mechanism to survive and improve livelihoods.

Besides diversification, periodic shift towards other activities exist. Street activities have no fixed boundaries and at any given time children are free to abandon a given activity in favor of another within or across street careers. A street working girl may shift to selling coffee in a street corner café if the money to continue selling *kollo* or fruits dwindles. When shoe-shinning work does not serve to make ends meet, a child may totally shift to vending lottery tickets for an undefined period of time. For instance, soon after accomplishing the second field work, the principal researcher met Mesa (15) and he told him that he had changed his career from portaging to shoe shinning because he thought that he could make more income from it. Shifting to other activities is mainly based on the nature of the reward and temporality of the work at hand. For example, children who are engaged in shoe shining, vending, portaging and begging complain about the rough weather, particularly during the rainy season. However, it should be noted that some street activities such as shoe shining and vending cannot be shifted into so easily unless one had a working capital or support networks to rely on either to get running capital or to make up for losses. Children must also adapt to the seasonal nature of their livelihoods by engaging in one income-generating activity when income from the other activity is no longer reliable. These activities are found in the urban informal economic sector, in which children find it relatively easy to integrate themselves.

Lines of credit

Street working children can be financially insecure, and their supportive social network can act as a buffer against livelihood constraints (Daniel 2015). As evidence from Dilla shows, a strong relationship and solidarity exists between street working children. From dialogue, interviews and discussions made with the children, it was possible to understand

that the strong mutual support networks that the children formed have led to an increased incidence of lending and borrowing among themselves. Short-term loans to afford costs entailed for food, health care, medication, education and so on is common among group members, and it is rare for children to run away after accumulating considerable debt. This is because the children know that social support is the most important asset they have, and they will not risk losing it. Recrimination over borrowed money can rupture friendship and a child can find him or herself cut adrift from other children. Cognizant of this fact, a child always repays a debt or keeps trying to repay so that he or she will find it easier to get further credit, and by continuing to remain in the folds of the social network. Providence and fear frame the children's deliberation on broken friendship and isolation because friends provide an important source of help. If one child fails to earn enough money on a particular day, others may give him or her some money so that he or she will not go home empty handed. For many children, going back home with some money in their pockets is a source of pride and satisfaction. Amene (15), a porter, explained this solidarity with the following words:

You cannot be alone on the streets while working; you have to work together. It is good to know that your friend is working nearby. When you need help you can call him, and sometimes you share your earnings or borrow money from each other so that you will not go home empty handed. You cannot always be fortunate in making money. When there is no work and you fail to make money, you can simply ask your friends to fill the void left by the lack of work. Street working children really help each other a lot on matters like this. Friendships commonly come on their own as sources of help.

Children relate to one another in terms of complexes of asking, giving and receiving. The principal researcher heard from Zeru (16), Zekaryas (16), Feleke (17), Mamitu (13) and many others how friendship opens up lines of credit during times of incapacitation through misfortune and ill-health. There is also the frequent transfer of cash between friends when work is unobtainable, meals are missed or when injury prevents earning. As Mamitu (13) says, 'I have friends who tell me that if I don't have money I should come to them for some.' These money transfers, small sums of cash ranging anywhere from a few cents to 100 birr, constitute loans between friends although the terms of repayment can differ. Some define the terms of a loan loosely like when Mentosha (16) refers to a friend's expectation of repayment 'when we are doing fine'. In other instances, like that of Zeru (17), the expectation is that 'I will take money from my friend and pay him the next day when I work'. In either case this transfer of money reinforces the mutual

dimension of their friendship, as Markos (14) indicated, “sometimes when I am hungry and I have no money he [his friend] gives me some. If he is also in need then I give him some”. In the day-to-day life of street working children, trust plays a key role. The exchange of favor was a widespread mechanism used by children in their day-to-day life and as such, it helps to cement their friendship and mutual interdependence despite the general lack of trust over money (Daniel 2015).

Cost sharing and ensuring security

Most of the street working children who participated in the research work on the streets either full-time or part-time and return to their homes. They indicated that they have been living in a group (a group of four or five) in a rented single-room accommodation by paying 200-250 birr per month. For children, economic factors outweigh the need for decent accommodation, and that is the main reason why they share a rented accommodation. Most of them live in poor dwelling units, often made of wood and mud, largely near the edges of the town, where house rents are too low. Many have problems with inadequate floor areas (sharing beds and mattress was common), severely cracked walls and, leaking roofs. The children live communally along family or ethnic lines, and by area of origin. Migrant street working children opt to live communally with their older siblings, relatives, fellow villagers or co-ethnics that are usually of the same sex. Still others live with friends, basically depending on the degree of proximity, and the economic circumstances of the houses they rented. However, for girls, ethnicity and place of origin is a less important criterion to decide on who should be their co-renters. It is rather gender based. Members of a household exercise equal right and status in matters affecting them. It is interesting to note that beyond a copying strategy, renting a house and living together facilitated children’s integration into the community in which they live (Daniel 2015).

Mentosha (16) and Kassu (12) are street beggars and worked and lived on the street during the periods of the field work though they always moved between home and street depending on the availability of income and weather conditions. Basic comforts are beyond the reach of Mentosha (16) and Kassu (12) and sleep takes place on flattened out discarded cardboard improvised into open air dormitories. Mentosha and Kassu were exposed to rain, cold, heat, mosquitoes and unsanitary conditions while living on the street. The spectra of harassment and physical violence are never far from their daily thoughts. Threats to self possessions are regular occurrences. Finding sleep that is both safe and efficacious is thus critical. Instances of individual sleeping are rare as they have to remain partially wakeful to avoid violence. What is more customary is to sleep with four or more children that are usually of similar age and gender. To sleep in this way involves trust, the conviction that the relative vulnerability that goes with open

sleeping will not be exploited by one's companion. This intangible conviction finds a more palpable existence in the physical connections between sleeping children. Their tactility, the customary positioning of hands, feet, elbows, and legs so as to connect with one another, provides a physical manifestation of their social interdependence, and a source of security and protection.

Remittances: Informal livelihood insurance

The boundaries of rural and urban areas are fluid. Although they appear to be disparate, rural and urban geographies are in practice interrelated (Tatek 2008). They are bound up in cultural, social, political and economic processes. Many rural children migrate to urban areas to execute various livelihood activities. In spite of the problems facing them, different livelihood opportunities are available to many urban child migrants. These relate primarily to their ability to work and earn some income from the informal sector. Many have demonstrated their ability to make savings and send remittances back home on a more or less regular basis and as such, they are proud of their achievement. Besides sending remittances, these children are tied to their rural families through visits, often made on occasions like Christmas and Easter and also when there is a funeral in the family. The kind of things the children remit goes beyond money to include food, clothing, school supplies, and medicines. Many children deny themselves the luxury of renting a better room or spending money unnecessarily. Their goal is to be able to save money for use when they go back to their family or to remit to members of the family in the village the children came from. The frequency of remittances is shaped by the children's migration pattern and the situation of the family back home. The distance does not break the value of kinship relations because most of the children have strong economic and moral attachment with their families and the rural folk. Zekaryas (16) has the following to say as regards this matter:

Many children come to Dilla to work, make money and support them and contribute to their families' wellbeing. For example, I send home money for various purposes. I also remit in kind and send home things like sugar, soap, matches and other household provisions. Many children who migrate to Dilla are tied to their rural families and sisters and brothers living elsewhere through remittances, visits, and the exchange of goods. So, that is how it all goes.

Remittances reflect a long Ethiopian tradition of strong family support. Like children who valued their families and saw themselves as part of shared livelihood strategies and as inter-dependent actors, many migrant street working children in Dilla see their

attachment with their family members as a driving engine for why they are physically detached from them and stay where they are and are doing what they do. For these children, remittance to their original household is one aspect of financial management. It is a vital and important part of the economies of children. Particularly at the beginning of their street working life, some children send a considerable part of their savings home. These remittances are used as a form of informal livelihood insurance. The children indicated that when they are unfortunate in life, they will go back home with confidence to spend the unfortunate times thanks to the money and other valuables they sent to support their family at earlier times. Remittance is also linked to children's sense of responsibility for contributing to the household. Children spoke of supporting their families, younger brothers or sisters who deserve funding and their support never fades even when they stay in Dilla for long. Thus, these children can be seen as negotiated independent actors. They function as multi-spatial social groups linked with one another as well as with other spatial contexts. According to the children, parents equate street work with "soft money" (cash in hand).

Images of Street Working Children

Often the term 'street children' is not far away from the word 'problem'. This is because street children occupy a 'prohibited' space and, as indicated by Hecht (1998), challenge the hierarchy of the worlds of home and school. It is children's presence on the street that becomes problematic, not the circumstance in which they find themselves. Children playing in residential streets are legitimized because they are in accordance with adult values (Lucchini 1996). It is because children work on the streets that they have been considered to be 'out of place'. The image of urban streets as 'adult space' has influenced this construction. The otherness of street working children is not based on their status as deprived children but, on their engagement with street life. The public is further intimidated by the press who tend to characterize street working children as 'at' risk or 'as' risks, dramatizing the image of 'troubled childhood' (Aptekar and Abebe 1997). We argue that some members of the public in Dilla (re)produce the negative image given to street working children. However, the reality is very different. The majority of the street working children we worked with used the streets for livelihood-making purposes. We argue that street working children are active citizens who have responsibility towards themselves and their vulnerable families and it is these responsibilities that forced them not only to be found at 'wrong places' but also involve in 'wrong careers' (Evans 2006). The street working children that participated in the research considered themselves as "well informed actors" with awareness about urban life and contemporary issues through their exposures and multiple careers.

It is not the intention of this study to romanticize the street, or to ignore the fact that street working children lead a difficult life. But, to say that they are vulnerable is not to say much (for so are many other children who receive far less attention), and as harsh as their situation is, it is wrong to think of it as invariably miserable. Street work provides children with a measure of material security. Most of the children are satisfied with what they live. For the same reason, a good outfit is usually not beyond the means of most street working children, although they might ignore the middle-class view of decency in preference for worn-out clothes, or decide to spend their money elsewhere. The street working children we studied were not individualistic. Rather, that they lived and operated in groups, where solidarity extended from the sharing of food to the provision of physical and emotional support. They were co-operative, socially competent, confident, persevering, and resourceful. They were also rarely cut off from 'positive' adult influence. Thus, one must ask why the phenomenon in its entirety is deemed beyond the pale. The answer is probably complex. We would propose, however, that its roots lie in our understanding of childhood as one that takes place at home, school and in other adult-constructed worlds (Tatek 2008) and that being out of these adult-constructed worlds leads to pathology. But, support for such claim is provided more by the ideological status of children in the North than by hard data on the ground in the global South. Thus, the ever-present debate on universalism versus relativism contains glimpses of realization that local contexts and intrinsic values may need to be accounted for and respected.

Child Rights and Legal Framework

Traditionally, Ethiopian culture does not give rights to children as understood in the CRC¹. However, at the national level, within the limitations that exist, Ethiopia has always taken the welfare of its children seriously. For various reasons, ideology amongst them, the socialist regime did not ratify the UN CRC, but it established an autonomous Children's Commission that facilitated care and support for orphans and poor children. Unfortunately, political indoctrination was also part and parcel of the care and support at that time. Since 1991, progress has been made to set up democratic institutions in the country and the State of Ethiopia adopted a new constitution in December 1995, which improved in many ways the legal protection of children by taking note of the provisions of the CRC and the ACRWC into account. Article 36 of the Constitution is entirely devoted to the rights of children. Article 43/4 of the Constitution provides that "The basic aim of development activities shall be to enhance the capacity of citizens for development and to meet their basic needs". Article 41/5 of the Constitution also

1 Four fundamental principles guide the CRC: 1) The best interest of the child; 2) Non-discrimination; 3) Right to life, survival, development; 4) Respect for the views of the child.

provides that “The State shall, within available means, allocate resources to provide rehabilitation and assistance to the physically and mentally disabled, the aged, and to children who are left without parents or guardians”.

The Government of Ethiopia has expressed political commitment to improve the situation of children, particularly through setting up an inter-ministerial legal committee to review national legislation and its compatibility with the provisions of the Convention, and through the establishment of committees on the rights of the child at the national, regional, zonal and woreda levels. The Government has also adopted a National Plan of Action for Children and established a ministerial committee to monitor its implementation. Although the initial draft bills did not include specific women’s and children’s rights in subsequent public hearings and consultations children’s and women’s rights were explicitly added to the mandates of the concerned offices. Five newly designed alternative childcare guidelines have been introduced by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA). These are guidelines for adoption, foster care, institutional care, reintegration, reunification and community-based child support programs. In every guideline, CRC articles are incorporated to create awareness among persons working with children. Concerted efforts have been undertaken by the Government and NGOs to protect and promote children’s rights, in particular in the field of information on HIV/AIDS and information campaigns on harmful traditional practices affecting children. With regard to the latter, a National Committee on Traditional Practices to develop information and sensitization campaigns on all forms of harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women and children, with a particular emphasis on female genital mutilation, has been established. Particularly, the rights of children and corresponding duties of respect for children was underlined.

However, there is still a gap between the convention and the national law and also between practice and theory. Considering the Ethiopian government’s initial report in 1997, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticized that little progress had been made to ensure that children participate at all levels and that their opinion is respected and wonders whether children’s freedom of expression was or was not part of Ethiopian culture. The Committee also criticizes urban-rural disparities hampering the full implementation of the CRC. Even though the government mentions economic, social and cultural difficulties, the lack of national resources cannot be a “good” excuse for a merely pro forma implementation. Particularly, concerns of relevance for street children in Ethiopia identified by the Committee include the lack of awareness and understanding of the principles and provisions of the CRC, the lack of adequate training of law enforcement officials, judicial personnel, teachers, social workers and medical personnel, the negative effects of child poverty and the situation of children in especially difficult circumstances. The Committee expressed particular concern with the

persistence of discrimination against vulnerable groups of children, such as orphans and children living and/or working in the streets. The Committee particularly recommended the State party to make urgent efforts to protect the rights of children currently living and/or working on the streets, including through the provision of education, health care, nutritional aid and alternative care. It also recommended the State party address the causes of children falling into a situation of street life. The Committee demanded the realization of economic, social and cultural rights of children including the right to health, education and rehabilitation. It suggested public information campaigns, to improve the participation of children in family, school and social life and the adoption and implementation of special protection measures for street living and street working children. This is a good approach because it builds on participation, which can be a means for empowerment and awareness creation.

The laws and regulations related to child labor in Ethiopia are mainly found under the Labor Proclamation. However, this proclamation does not cover children working on the streets. Proclamations and laws governing child work and labor were covered in different pieces of legislation, and they did not cover street work. The provisions of the CRC have not yet been implemented to a satisfying degree in the country. The current practice of soft law can nevertheless strengthen human rights and bring about a change in perception. This is crucial because the way street children are perceived in society makes a concrete difference to their daily lives, especially since part of the tragedy of street children is that they are not very attractive for sympathy. The lesson we can learn from this is that it is not enough to change the law. Rather, one has to change the mentality and the perception of the population. Children have the right to express themselves and to be heard, but in reality without adults to interpret and advocate, children would be left on their own. It is crucial for children to know about their rights, so that they can claim the exercise of them. We argue that first and foremost street working children's wish has to be respected. We must re-set our sights, to include the views, perceptions, experiences and opinions of the children themselves. A child with a positive self-esteem can more easily manage stressful experiences and is less prone to hopelessness. Street working children must not simply be protected but must be empowered to act and to lead autonomous lives. But in reality, street children feel as if they are not heard, as if they are not human, but just worthless beings that people disregard (Daniel 2015).

Even though the government has made pronouncements concerning children's livelihood, available evidence shows that, in practice, the actions taken by the government to address the needs of street living and street working children have been very limited, not to say non-existent. Violence against children and various other forms of child abuse persist to date to the extent that many are angry and ashamed by crimes against children in a society that regards itself decent and has strong religious underpinnings. There are certain

policy challenges that mostly hampered policy formulation for street living and street working children. First, there has been a shift from the welfare/need-based approach to the rights-based approach to vulnerable children. Though the CRC has been ratified by the government, the real shift in approach to the issue is not yet fully realized (SC UK 2003). Second, there has been a challenge to mobilize the political will of the concerned parties. As a result, most governmental responses have been mainly characterized by repression and cleaning the urban areas by removing the children forcefully, with the view that urban spaces are reserved for formal business and administrative purposes (Tatek 2009). Such actions tell us more about the real attitude of governments about street living and street working children than any examination of national legislation and policies. National socio-economic policies in the country fail to identify street living and street working children as a special category requiring special attention. The needs and problems of street living and street working children are often overlooked and occupy only a marginal position in policy discourses.

The CRC demands a holistic approach that guarantees the rights of all children, and its development over 25 years ago marked an important change in how governments are required to view children. There is now a global interest in the survival and development of children. The CRC lays out principal responsibilities of governments under international law in protecting and fulfilling the rights of all children. The application of the guiding principles of the CRC to actions designed to assist children is critical to the achievement of positive outcomes for them. The international community, represented in this regard by the UN, decided that each State should develop a comprehensive and CRC-compatible policy and set real, achievable and measurable targets. As indicated earlier, although the CRC convention has been ratified by Ethiopia, a real shift in approach to the issue has not yet been fully realized in the country. The case of children as addressed by the Convention is clearly multi-sectoral (economic, social, cultural and political) and hardly can any sector of the society escape being involved in matters affecting children. The idea behind the ratification of the CRC was to hold States accountable for their lack of concern and actions in improving children's livelihood and safeguarding children's rights. The legal framework for child rights exists in Ethiopia, but it requires strengthening both in terms of the legal protections and the implementation of the laws in place. Almost a decade after the ratification of the CRC, it is widely recognized that much more must be done, particularly in terms of implementation, institutional arrangement and advocacy in order to improve the situation of children's rights in Ethiopia, but there is still far to go.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As the interview made with the street working children in this study revealed, many perceived street work and domestic chores positively, viewing them essentially as duties owed to their families' precarious economic conditions and their love and support. Indeed for the children the works they do to support themselves and their parents are praise worthy activities through which they learn and demonstrate their 'coming of age'. They claimed that "working on the street" was fun and afforded them opportunities for livelihood, play, leisure, education and self-improvement; to demonstrate agency, opportunities to socialize, and to get information ahead of others. By engaging in street work and other forms of economic activities, child workers are helping to seek ways to resolve their problems and they deserve support and protection from everybody, particularly those within their communities. Their stories and experiences of street work and domestic chores give legitimacy to the claim that work is a form of social participation that empowers and integrates them into the "world of grown-ups" (Liebel 2004). Their positive evaluation and preference for street work can be interpreted as "an indicator of personal and cultural investment in coping with a familiar situation" (Woodhead 1999). In Dilla, children's work experiences on the streets are shaped in part by the perception of some members of the public, who consider that children should be located inside the home and school, rather than work on the streets. However, we found in the words of the children that their responsibility for themselves and towards their families forces them not only to be found at 'wrong places' but also to engage in the 'wrong careers' (Evans 2006). Children want freedom and play, but they also want recognition and respect for what they do and who they are, and work can bring both.

In Ethiopia, children have always worked and continue to work in order to earn livelihoods, despite the existence of legal provisions intended to prevent children from working. This study challenges the uniform assumptions of the 'best interest' principle, as ill-informed about culture-specificity and quite detrimental to the actual interests of working children, which is deeply embedded in specific socio-economic struggles. Rigidly criminalizing child work does not go with the dynamic realities found in street working children's ways of life. In our view, there is no alternative to listening to (street) working children in matters affecting them; they deserve full respect within their respective society. For reality-conscious people, it makes full sense that a cultural understanding of childhood and children's work does not really go with that of global official benchmarks that fail to grasp the ways in which the socio-cultural arena of Ethiopia functions today. For street working children in Ethiopia, the experience of childhood is clearly not the ideal world constructed in books, newspapers, or media while earning a living and making important livelihood decisions and choices are very much part of children's routine life.

It is nothing but a clever device to get with street working children's subjectivity and to pay heed to what is called 'living law'. Pursuing a globally dominant elimination model without taking due account of the evidence of co-existing legitimate contextual reasoning evidences a tricky interplay between official law and 'living law'.

Street working children are not a burden on the state. They are not extra beings which many better-off Ethiopians cannot tolerate in their happy life. Without developing an in-depth understanding of specific local norms and values, one would continue to conflate children's work in countries such as Ethiopia with so-called 'child labor' under the uniform global banner of the 'best interest' principle. This would inappropriately lead to the elimination course of action, which is definitely destructive to the genuine interests of many street working children. For the present, no doubt, the official elimination process and strategies need to be attuned to the prevailing specific socio-economic and cultural conditions of Ethiopia to keep legal rules reflective of the diverse interests of street working children and of their often amazing capacity to influence and partly reconstruct their own 'living laws' to be able to survive with human dignity in the face of difficult situations. This study has demonstrated the limits of social institutions, since many street working children would always remain beyond the purview of official legal actions and social locations. Therefore, the results of this study underscore the need to appreciate the predicaments of street working children through multiple lenses, so that action can be linked with the children's expectations, ensuring that their individual strengths are recognized and their limitations highlighted. Discourse that merely treats street work as evil is concerned more with defending the values of the author than defending the interests of the children involved.

Polices which criminalize street working children as 'illegal' may be coercive polices which stem from the belief that street working children are responsible for the situations in which they find themselves. We need to be aware of the fact that trying to remove the children from the street is not a solution as it hardly deals with the essential relations. One way of establishing polices that would have a positive impact on street working children would be to involve the children themselves in developing policies and strategies that aim at improving their lives and livelihoods. Children's ingenuity in finding suitable and logical solutions to the shortfalls in their living situations deserves to be presented as a "childhood asset". It provides a number of suitable entry points for building interventions by starting from what is already in place rather than attempting to substitute it by unduly idealized and essentially different outcomes. It is necessary to recognize children as agents, capable of analyzing and responding to their situations and problems, and as citizens with both rights and obligations in society. Understanding children's rights could broaden our understanding of children's subjectivity in the making of both culture and childhood. Intervention strategies must be based on a thorough understanding of the

complexity of the reasons that children work for in particular contexts. Children have the right to be heard on matters that affect their lives. Thus, shifting our focus from the *needs* to the *rights* approach may be one way forward.

Successful policies and programs rarely address a single type of asset but support a set of processes that are mutually reinforcing. The failure of many ongoing programs to provide a better life for working children can be explained by their limited consideration of what matters to children. It tends to underestimate the importance of the coping strategies that the children (individually or cooperatively) developed. Many programs are too often oriented towards implementing a mix of standardized interventions not relevant to children's expressed needs, desires and aspirations. Children have presented what we might refer to as "their priorities". In their day to day lives they actively establish strategies for livelihood protection and promotion as a starting point for increasing wellbeing. The resilience of children to cope positively with their situation can be strengthened through children's groups, training in peer support, and life skills. Speaking of children's right to education means that we have to find a form of education that fits in with their work and is appropriate to their life worlds. We must think of children whose interest is the combination of earning and learning. Material, technical and moral support, market-based skill developments and participation in vocational cooperatives and parental training and support (directing vulnerable parents to institutions providing social welfare, vocational training and anti-poverty programs) are important in street working children's lives. There is a need to undertake comprehensive specific community-based advocacy programs to address various forms of child work as an important outreach strategy to engage a larger audience and promote sustained and strategic campaigns and interventions to educate the public and seek changes in policy and action. We safely argue that children's perception of wellbeing is also dependent on the quality of the social relationships they build with their peers. Policy makers and practitioners should pay more attention to the promotion of a more comprehensive package of social policies that can give concern to the social relationships that children build, which play an important role in their lives. We should not work to remove children from work unless better alternatives are available. Failure to take this crucial factor into account risks, at best, wasting public resources.

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Changing and Hidden Aspects of Early Marriage Arrangements among Peasant Communities of Amhara Region: The Case of Fogera *Woreda* in South Gondar

Guday Emirie and Eshetu Ewnetu

Abstract

The overall objective of this article is to investigate the changing and hidden aspects of early marriage among Kuahr Mikael and Zeng Mikael peasant communities of Fogera Woreda in South Gondar Zone of Amhara Region, Northwestern Ethiopia. Primary data were gathered through a combination of ethnographic research methods involving in-depth interviews, extended case studies, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and personal observations. Secondary data were obtained through a critical review of related literature and relevant documents. The data were organized thematically and analyzed through systematic interpretation and triangulation of various sources. The study found that the trend of early marriage arrangements has changed from elaborate public wedding feasts during the grand parents' and parents' generations to hidden wedding feasts arranged in the name of local social and religious gatherings during the children's generation. The study also found that the age at first marriage for both girls and boys is decreasing and early marriage practice persists in a hidden pattern during the children's generation due to complex and inter-related socio-cultural, economic and other newly emerging factors related to lack of hope in formal education. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the local community and religious leaders as well as other members of the community facilitate the hidden arrangement of the practice of early marriage though they know that it is against the law. The study concludes by suggesting possible areas for intervention and future research.

Key Words: Early Marriage, Child Marriage, Childhood, Amhara Region, Fogera Woreda, and Peasant Communities.

1. Introduction

Ethiopia has one of the lowest ages at first marriage. A study in the early 1990s showed that almost all girls were married by the age of 20, a much higher proportion than in any other country except Mali (SCD, MoE and MoWA 2008). According to the 2000 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 31% of women aged 15-49 years were married before the age of 15 (CSA and ORC 2001, in Gage 2009) and more than half of young marriages were arranged with a man who was at least 10 years older than the girl (Pathfinder, 2006). In Amhara Region, according to UNICEF (2001:17), “marriage at a very young age is more widespread than country data suggest”.

According to the NCTPE (1997), the prevalence rate of early marriage at the national level was 54%. Rates of early marriage were the highest in Amhara (82%), Tigray (79%), Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella (64%). However, the average age at first marriage in Ethiopia may mask the fact that early marriage may still prevail in some districts within the country or the region, where marriage agreements take place for girls as young as 4 to 5 years old and sometimes before birth (UNICEF 2002, in Guday 2005). For instance, in one sample from Gojjam, 88% of girls were married before the age of 15 and 37% before they were 10 (NCTPE 2003:137-138).

Early marriage is a deep-rooted practice with a very high rate of occurrence mainly among the peasant communities of the north and central highlands (Tilahun 2005). The Amhara National Regional State Women’s Affairs Office (ANRSWAO 2003, in Guday 2005) also asserts that early marriage is common in the Amhara Region. Pathfinder (2006) and UNFPA (2008) also found that early childbearing is common and the median age of marriage in the region is as low as 15.2 years, which is less than the country’s median age of marriage of 16.1 years. Various studies and reports (e.g. Alemante 2004; Pathfinder International 2006, 2008, and 2009) further reveal that the high prevalence of early marriage in Amhara Region explains the higher rates of fistula victim girls from the region.

In general, all the reviewed studies and reports have documented the highest incidence of the practice of early marriage in Amhara Region. Most national studies have tried to identify the causes and consequences of early marriage mainly based on quantitative data, which do not reveal the reasons for the changing and hidden arrangements of early marriage at the local level. There are some in-depth ethnographic studies on early marriage and its effects on girls’ education (Guday 2005) and early marriage and its reproductive health consequences (Alemante 2004) among peasant communities of West and East Gojjam Zones of Amhara Region. However, there is no in-depth ethnographic study on the changing and hidden aspects of early marriage arrangements among

peasant communities of Fogera *Woreda* in South Gondar Zone of Amhara Region. This study attempts to fill this research gap by investigating and analyzing the changing and hidden aspects of early marriage arrangements among Kuahr Mikael and Zeng Mikael communities (hereafter study communities) of Fogera *Woreda*.

2. Conceptual And Legal Frameworks And Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual and Legal Frameworks

In this study, “early marriage” refers to “child marriage” and “childhood” is conceptualized in accordance with the following international and regional conventions and national legal frameworks.

At the international level, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC 1989) defines a “child” as “every human being below the age of 18 years...” (Article 1). Regionally, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (OAU 1990) defines a “child” as “every human being below the age of 18 years” (Article 2). Furthermore, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN-CEDAW 1979) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (OAU 1990) suggest a minimum age for marriage of 18 years, consistent with the definition of “childhood” articulated in the CRC (1989). Accordingly, Article 16 of the CEDAW requires states “to ensure that men and women have the same rights to enter into marriage and to freely choose a spouse, and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent”. Similarly, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child states that “child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory” (Article 21/2).

At the national level, the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) has signed and ratified international and regional instruments that promote and protect the rights of women and children. Accordingly, CEDAW (1979) was ratified in September 1981 and periodical reports have been submitted on its implementation. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) was ratified in December 2002 and the National Action Plan for Children has been prepared for its implementation. The CRC (1989) was ratified in September 1990 and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs has been given the responsibility of overseeing its effective implementation (FDRE 2006; 2009).

As to the legal frameworks of early marriage in Ethiopia, the revised national family code (FDRE 2000) legislates that: (1) “neither a man nor a woman who has not attained the full age of eighteen years shall conclude marriage” (Article 7); “marriage concluded by a man or a woman under the age of eighteen years shall be dissolved on the application of any interested person or the public prosecutor” (Article 31); and “a valid marriage shall take place only when the spouses have given their free and full consent” (Article 6), which is in line with the provision of the national constitution (FDRE 1995) which states that “marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses” (Article 34/2). Furthermore, Article 629/1 of the revised criminal code (FDRE 2004) states that “sexual intercourse with a girl of 13-18 years by a person of the opposite sex will be punishable with a maximum rigorous sentence of 15 years regardless of the girl’s consent for the act”.

Coming to the study area, the *Zikre Hig* of the Council of the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS 2001) has different provisions on the rights of women and children in relation to marriage arrangements. Some of the provisions related to the issue at hand state that: “Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties” (Article 34/2); and “The state shall enforce the rights which the women have to extricate themselves from the influences of harmful laws, customs and practices that are meant to oppress or cause physical or mental harm to women are prohibited” (Article 35/4).

In general, early marriage, marriage below 18 years of age, is an international, regional and national concern as it violates girls’ rights, truncates their childhood, and frequently denies them a say in the choice of their partner and the timing of marriage. Furthermore, it circumscribes several rights of girl children outlined in the UN-CRC (1989), including the right not to be separated from their parents against their will (Article 9), the right to freedom of expression (including seeking and receiving information and ideas (Article 13), the right to education (Articles 28 and 29), the right to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities (Article 31) and the right to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (Article 34).

In the final analysis, early marriage, in its broadest sense, refers to “any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physiologically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing” (IAC 1995; FMRWG 2000). In this study, early marriage “will be used to refer to both formal marriages and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner as if married before the age of 18” (UNICEF 2005).

2.2 Review of Related Literature

Despite the various conventions and corresponding national laws discussed above, many young women (and to a lesser extent men) in the developing world are still subject to early marriage (Sweetman 2003:9; Otoo-Oyortey and Pobi 2003; Tilahun 2005; Nour 2006; Amsalu 2007; SCD MoE and MoWA 2008). In this regard, since family issues are beyond the state's control (Surtees 2000, in Sweetman 2003), the use of law as a means of regulating early marriage is not sufficient.

Ethiopia is among the forerunners to face the practice of early marriage globally though the national family code legislates against the marriage of both boys and girls before the age of 18. In particular, early marriage is a deeply rooted common practice in Amhara Region (Pathfinder 2006 and 2009; Erulkar et al. 2004; Alemante 2004; Guday 2005; SCD, MoE and WAO 2008).

In all regions of Ethiopia, most girls marry before they reach puberty. Most customary marriages among the rural majorities of Ethiopia are early marriages arranged by parents, “without the free consent of the would-be-spouses, mostly without the consent of the would-be young brides. Especially, among the Amhara, early marriage arrangements sometimes take place even before the birth of a girl-child. In this context, very young brides have little negotiating power to protect themselves from early arranged marriage practices” (Guday 2005: 32-33).

Early marriage takes different forms of arrangement in Ethiopia. Some studies (Tilahun 2005:5; SCD, MOE and WAO 2008:19) classify early marriage arrangements in Ethiopia into: (1) *Promissory marriage*, which takes place even before the birth of the child; (2) *Child marriage*, under 10 years of age in which the girl is introduced to wifehood under the guidance of parents-in-law until she reaches puberty; (3) *Early adolescent marriage*, concluded when the girl is between the ages of 10 to 14. At this instance, the girl may stay in her parents' home and periodically visit her parents-in-law; and (4) *Late adolescent marriage*, i.e., between the ages of 15 to 18. In each of the above-mentioned types of marriage, marriage is arranged after negotiations between two families. The bride who has no idea who her husband would be is required to prove she is a virgin (UN-ECA 1999). According to Tilahun (2005), the first three types of marriage arrangement are practiced in the northern and central parts of Ethiopia, where marriage at seven or eight years is not uncommon (UNICEF 2001). In other words, early marriages in northern Ethiopia are parent-centered arrangements between two families of different lineages, and are both traditional and widely prevalent; they may be contracted between families as a verbal agreement before or any time after the two children's birth (Haile-Gabriel 1994). In Amhara Region, according to Erulkar et al. (2004), the most extreme forms of child marriage are practiced.

Various studies also identify very complex and inter-related reasons for the persistence of early marriage in Ethiopia in general and in Amhara Region in particular. Cohen (2004) and Haberland et al. (2005) argue that grinding poverty, 'dowry' pressures, parental concerns about premarital sex and pregnancy, the low social status of women, lack of education and other economic or cultural reasons contribute to the practice of early marriage, whereas early marriage, in turn, reinforces these conditions. According to Helen Pankhurst (1992), the major reasons for early marriage include high social and cultural value attached to virginity; the need for creating a bond between families rather than a personal arrangement by the bride and the groom; and a growing trend towards a reduction of ritual and expenditure for all marriages, combined with a shift toward informality. The major factors that still sustain early marriage, according to Haile-Gabriel (1994), are the urgency to utilize the immediate capacity of parents to establish a family for their children; 'the marriage rush' is partly to enlarge kinship relations for protection and economic security. Another reason is the urge to conform to the internalized norms of age-old compelling tradition and the patriarchal subordination of women that places high value on virginity. According to Alemante (2004), the major reasons for early marriage are political, economic and socio-cultural factors. Similarly, Guday (2005) maintains that economic motives, life insecurities, socio-cultural justifications, gender ideologies and lack of awareness about legal issues are the major reasons for early marriage. For Amsalu (2007), the major reasons for early marriage are economic motives derived from parents and close relatives, societal influences and cultural impacts. In general, economic, socio-cultural, political reasons and the rate of urbanization are cited as the major reasons for early marriage.

Different studies also report that early marriage has various consequences on the wellbeing of girls and women; for example, sexual and reproductive health (Alemante 2004), education (Guday 2005), autonomy and decision-making, gender-based violence, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. Early marriage of girls is also linked to other rights, such as the right to free expression of views, the right to protection from all forms of abuse, and the right to protection from "harmful traditional practices" (UNICEF 2005). The most frequently mentioned harmful effects of arranged early marriages are greater risk of domestic violence, poor health, divorce, abandonment, early widowhood, psychological disadvantage, lower education and work skills, reinforced gender stereotypes and roles, and a cycle of poverty and abuse in which children of young and illiterate mothers tend to face the same cycle of deprivation and abuse experienced by their mothers (Guday 2005).

In general, the reviewed studies describe the nature and prevalence of early marriage and its causes and consequences in Ethiopia mainly based on quantitative data, which did not reveal the reasons for the hidden and changing patterns of early marriage arrangements

at the local level. There are a few in-depth ethnographic studies on early marriage and its effects on girls' education (Guday 2005) and early marriage and its reproductive health consequences (Alemante 2004) among the peasant communities of West and East Gojjam Zones of Amhara Region. However, none of the reviewed studies have attempted to deal with the changing and hidden arrangements of early marriage among the peasant communities of Fogera *Woreda* in South Gondar Zone of Amhara Region. This study, therefore, attempts to fill this research gap by investigating and analyzing the changing and hidden aspects of early marriage arrangements among Kuahr Mikael and Zeng Mikael communities in Fogera *Woreda*, the study area. This study is specifically aimed at: (1) investigating the changing and hidden patterns of early marriage arrangements across three generations (grand-parents, parents and children); (2) exploring the reasons for the hidden arrangements of early marriages in the children's generation; and (3) examining the roles of local community-based organizations and government institutions in the hidden arrangements of early marriage.

3. The Study Area And Research Methods

3.1. Description of the Study Area

This study was conducted in Fogera *Woreda*, which is located in South Gondar Administrative *Zone* of Amhara National Regional State, Northwestern Ethiopia. Amhara Region is composed of eleven *zones*, 113 *Woredas* and 3,216 *Kebeles* (ANRS BoFED 2010). Fogera *Woreda*, the study area, is divided into 29 rural Peasant Associations and 5 urban *Kebeles* (RDBOA 2007/8; in Astewel 2010). Fogera *Woreda* is a surplus-crop producing area and has a good potential for rice production (Astewel 2010).

The ethnographic fieldwork for this study was conducted in Kuahr Mikael and Zeng Mikael Peasant Associations (PAs). The two study peasant communities were purposely selected based on the following criteria. First, Kuahr Mikael represents one of the well-known peasant communities of the *Woreda* in rice production and irrigation; Zeng Mikael belongs to the lowland areas and its major crop is *teff*. As a result, households in the first community are relatively better off than the second community. Secondly, the first community is only 7 kilo metres from the capital town (Woreta) of the study *Woreda*, whereas the second community is relatively far, 34 kilo meters away from the *Woreda* capital. The availability of different institutions such as primary schools, police stations and the like were taken into consideration.

3.2. Research Methods

This study used primary and secondary data sources. The secondary data sources were used to set the conceptual and legal frameworks as well as review the empirical studies on issues pertaining to early marriage. The study was predominantly based on primary data gathered through ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 11th January 2010 to 8th March 2010. The primary data were generated through a combination of qualitative research methods involving in-depth interviews, extended case studies, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and personal observations, which are briefly discussed as follows.

First, in-depth interviews and extended case studies were conducted with 20 interviewees across three generations (early married grandmothers, mothers and daughters) among the two study communities (10 from each). The interviewees were selected based on age, marital status, and willingness to participate in the study. The primary purpose of the in-depth interviews with early-married girls, mothers and grandmothers was to understand their experiences (before and after early marriage) and then to explore changes and continuities in the arrangements of early marriage across the three generations. Six extended case studies were gathered to further illustrate and explore issues raised during the in-depth interviews.

Second, the study conducted key informant interviews with 27 informants including members of council of elders, community and religious leaders, local peasant association leaders, gender activists, female students' advising committee heads, school principals, and health extension workers among the two study communities (12 from each) and three *Woreda* officials among Women Affairs, Justice and Police Officers in the *Woreda*'s capital, Woreta. These informants were selected based on their role/position in the study community, knowledge about the social norms promoting early marriage and the law prohibiting it, and willingness to participate in the study. The purpose of the key informant interviews was to explore the changing aspects of early marriage arrangements through time and the roles of local community-based organizations and government institutions in the hidden arrangements of early marriage.

Third, ten focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with male household heads, female household heads, early married girls, council of elders, and community leaders among the two peasant communities (five from each). Thus, FGDs with five different groups consisting of five to seven participants were organized based on sex, age, marital status, and role/position in each study community. The purpose of the FGDs was to understand the homogenous group participants' attitudes, feelings, and beliefs as well as their experiences related to the practice of early marriage and the reasons for its changing and

hidden arrangements during the children's generation. Above all, the FGDs were used to crosscheck and validate the data gathered through the in-depth interviews.

Fourth, the ethnographic fieldwork was conducted between 11th January 2010 to 8th March 2010 among Kuahr Mikael and Zeng Mikael peasant communities of Fogera *Woreda*. During this period, ethnographic data about day-to-day activities of the study communities were gathered through personal observations, and systematic note taking of events and behaviors coupled with informal interviews. Furthermore, personal observation of the facial expressions, movements and feelings of the study participants was conducted during the in-depth interviews and FGDs to crosscheck the ideal and actual patterns of behavior.

It should be noted that all the participants were informed about the purpose of the study before conducting interviews as well as FGDs. They were also informed about the confidentiality of their responses and that the study would not disclose their real names. All the interviews and FGDs were conducted in the local language (Amharic) in accordance with the fieldwork research guides and the information was documented through intensive note taking and voice-recording with the consent of the research participants. All the ethnographic data were transcribed in Amharic on a daily basis and some informants were asked to clarify part of their own narratives after transcription. The validity and trustworthiness of the ethnographic data were addressed through prolonged interviews and ethnographic observation throughout the duration of the two-month field work.

Finally, the data gathered through primary and secondary sources were organized and analyzed as follows. First, the qualitative data were transcribed in Amharic and then translated into English. Second, the primary data were thematically organized based on the specific objectives. Third, the data were analyzed qualitatively and data extracted from secondary sources were critically reviewed. Finally, the perspectives and insights from the primary and secondary data sources were analyzed through triangulation to maximize the validity and reliability of the findings.

4. Findings And Discussions

This section presents and discusses key findings on: (1) Changing and hidden patterns of early marriage arrangements across three generations (grandparents, parents and their children); (2) Reasons for arranging early marriage in a hidden manner during the children's generation; and (3) Roles of local community-based organizations as well as government institutions in the hidden arrangements of early marriage in the two study communities.

4.1. The Changing and Hidden Patterns of Early Marriage Arrangements

The changing and hidden patterns of early marriage arrangements have been investigated across three generations (grandparents, parents and children) between two peasant communities. The grandparents' generation includes elderly people (men and women) who have grandchildren; the parents' generation involves mothers and fathers who have married children; and the children's generation includes only girls who got married under the age of 18.

4.1.1. Early marriage arrangement patterns during the grandparents' generation

The grandparents' generation dates back to the imperial regime when the tradition was to marry off girls in their teens and boys in their twenties (Levine 1965, cited in Alemante 2004). The marriageable age was between 10-13 for the bride and 18-20 for the groom (Hoben 1973). There was also a wide age difference between the husband and the wife. Grandparent informants from the study communities thus stated:

In our time (during Emperor Haile-Selassie's regime), a bride had to be much younger than her husband and the huge age gap between the spouses favors the husband a great deal. A younger wife was expected to give many births throughout her life and to respect her husband in all instances. She was also supposed to protect her husband as he gets old (Kuahr Mikael and Zeng Mikael, January-February 2010).

During the grandparents' generation, the marriage alliance was between two families of relatively equal social and wealth status (Reminick 1976). The marriage alliance was primarily designed to retain political power and to channel available resources to the dominant groups of the society (Alemante 2004). According to local informants, marriages were arranged by parents and blessed by religious fathers who encouraged the marriage of daughters before the age of 15. In short, the marriage arrangement processes during the grandparents' generation were influenced by social, economic, political and religious values prevailing during the imperial regime.

4.1.2. Early marriage arrangement patterns during the parents' generation

During the parents' generation, the marriage arrangement procedures were fairly similar to that of the grandparents' generation. However, religion did not play a significant role in the marriage arrangement process during the *Derg* regime due to the progressive

inculcation of the socialist ideology even in the peasant communities of Ethiopia (Alemante 2004). According to local informants, wedding feasts were decreasing both in quality and quantity as a manifestation of the social, economic, political and legal reforms. One local key informant narrated the situation as follows:

I remember that during the Derg regime, the peasant association leaders imprisoned [for two days] parents who had arranged early marriage for their children, mainly for their daughters. Then, they were released after their confession of not doing the act again. However, the government's legal sanction did not continue for long and we continued to marry our children at an early age. However, nowadays, it is too hard to arrange early marriage for our children publicly; so we started to arrange it in a hidden manner (Kuahr Mikael, January 2010).

Although further investigation is needed to verify the above information, the social, economic and political insecurities during the *Derg* regime may have exacerbated the prevalence of the practice of early marriage and the marriage age of both girls and boys may have dropped through time as discussed in the following sub-section.

4.1.3. Early marriage arrangement patterns during the children's generation

The trends and patterns of early marriage arrangements among the study communities are changing during the children's generation. The age at first marriage for both girls and boys is decreasing (Alemante 2004; Guday 2005). According to Alemante (2004), the age at first marriage dropped from 12 to 9 years for girls and from 18 to 12 years for boys. Guday (2005) also found that the average age at first marriage for the mothers' generation was 11, whereas it was 8 years for the daughters' generation. Moreover, the public attendance of wedding feasts of early-married girls was changed into the hidden marriage alliance between two families with equal social and economic status through social or religious gatherings.

Marriage alliance between families of equal social and economic status is not a new practice among the peasant communities of Amhara Region, but now it is practiced in a hidden manner. Accordingly, nowadays girls from families with a relatively low social and economic status are not sought for marriage at an early age as in the previous times. An elder male informant described the case as follows:

I am very poor and I even plough my small plot of land by borrowing oxen from others. I cannot think of giving my daughters away for marriage because parents seek only girls from wealthy (cattle and land rich) families because the latter do not have problems in sponsoring big wedding feasts and in giving endowments

to the newly-weds. Since my three daughters, due to my poverty, are unlikely to be asked for marriage, I have decided to send them to school to enable them to pursue their education (75 year old man, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

The above statement suggests that some early-married girls from economically better-off families are out-of-school or school dropouts. The following case shows the negative effect of early marriage on girls' education:

I got married at the age of 12 when I was attending grade 4. My marriage was arranged in a hidden manner in the name of a religious ceremony (Tir Mikael şäbal). Only family members and close relatives knew that it was my wedding feast. I also realized that my parents were doing a good thing for me. Unfortunately, I was not able to continue with my education. Things were getting worse and worse when I gave birth a year ago at the age of 14 (15 year old mother who dropped out of school, Kuahr Mikael, January 2010).

Participants of the FGDs held with early married girls expressed their preference to get married at a later age based on their free consent though they got married just out of respect for their parents' wishes and to conform to the local social norms. These participants described life after early marriage as follows:

After our marriage, we have had two-fold responsibilities: to manage our home and serve our in-laws, who treat us like their servants. Furthermore, our in-laws are eager to get grandchildren (preferably sons) from us to secure the continuity of their family line. If we are not able to give birth, though the failure is on our husbands' part, we will be divorced....We live in a very stressful condition, mainly controlled by our in-laws who put pressure on us to give birth at an early age. Worst of all, if we get pregnant at an early age, the delivery process will be held in a secret manner without being attended to by the local professional health workers who might report it to the responsible local government bodies and cause difficulties for our in-laws. So, the delivery should be carried out by the traditional birth attendants (FGDs with early married girls, Kuahr Mikael and Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

Not only in-laws but also parents put pressure on their married daughters to give birth at an early age and make them grandparents and thus enable them to get social status and respect through their children's successful marriage. The following testimony demonstrates the case in point:

Glory to God, I am happy in my life. I got married at the age of 11. My husband is a priest, 18 years older than me. I gave birth for the first time when I was 13.

Thanks to God, I have 10 children. Six of them have been married and given birth. Now, I am happy for being able to see my grandchildren. I think this is the ultimate success in my life (50 year-old grandmother, Zeng Mikael, January 2010).

The above case is about a grandmother's success being measured through her capacity to give birth to many children and to be able to have her own grandchildren. This reinforces the practice of early marriage despite its negative consequences on girls' well being and development through education. As a result, almost all parents, mainly mothers, in the study communities still arrange early marriage for their daughters without considering their daughters' preference. The following case illustrates this:

My daughter was too young to make decisions on her marriage arrangement. It is our (parents') duty to select and approve our son-in-law. This needs a big decision and it is a big deal. It is not a game that you play and win; it is life, which deserves something special; it is a generation formation. My family and I are in a good condition because of my parents' careful arrangement of my marriage and that is why we arranged our daughter's marriage in the same way, but in a hidden manner since the government is against it (39 year-old mother, Kuahr Mikael, January 2010).

Mothers who participated in the FGDs held in both study communities agreed with the aforementioned argument and confessed that "children's marriage should be arranged by parents and no other body is responsible for such an important parental or family decision. This is also our tradition and no one can order us to change this tradition."

Early married girls also adhere to the tradition of early arranged marriage because their parents are not willing to accept their views about when and whom to marry. The following stories reflect the views of early married girls:

I was forced to marry at the age of 12, when I was attending grade 2. At that time, my parents did not allow me to continue with my education. My husband was not also willing to allow me to do so. Thus, I was voiceless and had little to say about the marriage arranged by my parents (2nd grade drop-out early married girl, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

We were forced to marry at an early age. None of our parents gave us a choice

about our future life other than marriage because it is the only way of life for them. Initially, most of our parents were not willing to allow us to attend formal schooling because they did not want to let us be exposed to the public sphere. They feared that formal education might make us develop ‘bad behavior’, which would not be socially appropriate if the girls are to be good wives. They want to nurture us until our death in conformity with the local gender norm, which gives high value to early arranged marriage for girls. As a result, it would be unthinkable and shameful for our parents not to keep their promise to give our hands in marriage (FGDs with early married girls, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

Early married children are not accountable for any failure in their marriage in which all the roles and responsibilities of each partner as well as the expectations of parents and community members are clearly defined. In the early marriage arrangement process, parents are fully responsible for investigating the character, socio-economic background and other basic attributes of their son/daughter-in-law including their family members. If conflict arises between the two marrying partners, parents take a lion’s share of the responsibility and show no hesitation to give support to their children. The local people also assume that parents never make wrong decisions about their children’s marriage as elucidated by an elder male informant as follows:

I think, parents are always right, and they love their children very much; so whatever they do for their children are right for them. Moreover, parents are more knowledgeable about social life and cultural issues of the community. I think that is always the best option to maintain the commands of God and preserve our social custom and tradition. No one is urged to marry over night; it needs enough time to know the marriage partners and their family members. Thus, only parents know about which one is a perfect mate for their children because children may not make wise decisions on their marriage and future life choices. As a result, most of the time, early marriages arranged by parents are stable and successful in terms of accumulating social capital and material wealth (66-year old man, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

In the study communities, parents even now arrange promissory marriage for their daughters to forge an alliance with friends or families with high social and economic status. The following case study explains the persistence of the practice during the children’s generation. The case is in line with the finding of SCD, MoE and MoWA (2008:20) that “girls are promised for marriage in infancy, at 4-5 years, and, even while in the womb”.

Case Study 1

Promissory Marriage and Its Hidden Arrangement

I got married when I was 8 years old. My father made an agreement and pledged me in marriage to his friend's son (Molalign) when I was born. My mother told me that Molalign's parents gave me gifts such as new clothes while I was in their home at the time of gəṭəgəṭə [the promissory marriage arrangement feast which started during my birth and materialized during my baptism, 80 days after birth] and all my baptism's expenses were covered by Molalign's parents. After 8 years' feast of gəṭəgəṭə, the two families arranged a secret wedding ceremony in the name of a religious feast (St. Mikael šäbal). Of course, the actual purpose of this ceremony was well-known by community members though they never wanted to report it to the local administration. After the hidden wedding feast, the two families pledged an agreement under the witness of agabi shimagilewoch (three elderly male marriage negotiators). The major issues of the agreement were about my education, the time of my first sexual intercourse with my husband, my fertility, and the time for starting to live with my husband in our own goḡḡo (hut). In short, I knew nothing about my marriage before my friends called me 'yā Molalign məšt (Molalign's wife)'. I got irritated and asked my father about this identification. He told me that he pledged me to Molalign when I was born and he feared the stigma of qalā bāla (one who does not keep his promise); he also wanted to see my destiny through an arranged marriage in which I was expected to be a good wife, mother, and homemaker at the expense of my formal education. Now, I am not attending school because it was not seriously considered by my parents, in-laws as well as the elderly marriage negotiators who came to my parents' home to decide on my future destiny, including my formal schooling (An in-depth interview with out-of-school married girl, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

In general, across the three generations, the newly-weds are not expected to be age mates and the wife must be younger than her husband at least by 10 years for the following gender-specific reasons. First, a young wife has to be submissive to both her in-laws and her husband. Second, a young wife is expected to give birth to many children, mainly sons who are supposed to be the protectors of the family. Third, a young wife is supposed to look after and care for her husband not only in his youth but also when he gets old. Furthermore, the early arranged marriage alliance between two families with equal social and economic status persists across the three generations. However, the arrangement of early marriage in a hidden manner is a new phenomenon during the children's generation.

4.2. Reasons for Hidden Early Marriage during the Children's Generation

In the two study communities, parents arrange early marriage in a hidden manner for the following complex and inter-related reasons.

4.2.1. Socio-Cultural Factors

In this study, the most common socio-cultural factors contributing to the persistence of the practice of early marriage during the children's generation are:

- (1) gender-specific socialization of children,
- (2) social pressures to conform to social norms,
- (3) fear of the *qomo-qār* stigma,
- (4) fear of loss of virginity and related stigmas,
- (5) parents' desire to continue their family line, and
- (6) parents' desire to have a male guardian for their daughters.

These socio-cultural factors are briefly discussed below.

4.2.1.1 Gender-specific socialization of children

Female children are socialized to be obedient and submissive to their parents, in-laws and husbands. Parents also consider their daughters as grown-ups ready for marriage at an early age. Most early married girls who participated in this study reported that their mothers trained them in female roles so as to become a good wife. The uneducated early married mothers also advised their daughters to be inspired by their early married life rather than be interested in other life opportunities, including formal education.

The following cases gathered through in-depth interviews with three early married girls depict the strong influence of gender-specific socialization on the persistence of early marriage:

Since childhood, both my father and mother used to tell me about the benefits of marriage. Nobody has ever been sent to formal school in our family. Our parents are always eager to arrange marriages for all their children. They are also proud of being grandparents because of my eldest married brother. As a result, I dreamt and thought of getting married at an early age and rearing children as a wonderful moment in my life (13 year old married girl, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

My mother was married while she was 13, and my father 21. They got married forty years ago and they never had a single conflict in their married life. It was interesting for me to hear about the success stories of my parents' marriage life and I wished to have a married life like theirs. They also told me about the social prestige one could get from marriage. Thus, I desired to get married, establish my own family, give birth, and live a wonderful life with my husband like my parents. That is why I never dared to challenge my parents when they arranged my marriage in a hidden manner (14 year old married girl, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

My father is a priest and a respected person in our community. All of us (his children) are brought up in accordance with the socially appropriate ways of behaving. As a result, nobody comments on our behavior. I started formal schooling when I was 8. But I stopped schooling when I got married at the age of 11 while I was in grade 3. My parents, mainly my mother, was very eager to marry off me and to see my first birth. She also wanted to get back what she contributed to others' wedding feasts through my wedding ceremony. Now, I am an 18-year old mother with two children (Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

The local people also strongly believe that arranged marriages could last longer if and only if girls marry at a young age and are socialized to remain submissive to their in-laws and husbands like previous generations. Elderly people still believe that boys should get married to girls who are 10 to 15 years younger than themselves. An elderly local informant explained the reason behind the wide age gap between the spouses as follows:

Girls need less preparation than boys for taking marriage responsibilities because girls' duty is home bounded. A girl is able to hold and shoulder household responsibilities at an early age, even at the age of 8. Hence, it is not difficult to manage her goḡgo (home) after this age. The major difficulty for a boy is to manage the farm activities (89 year old man, Kuahr Mikael, January 2010).

Guday (2005:109) also found that "boys are trained to perform agricultural activities to become strong, successful farmers and bread-winners of house-holds, while girls receive training in domestic activities in preparation for their future married life as housewives and mothers." If a young married girl does not conform to her socially defined roles in her marital life, she will be forced to divorce and nobody would ask her for marriage again, i.e., it would be difficult to get a husband again. In this connection, one elder female informant noted that, "It is much easier to get a wife for a 90-year old man than to get a husband for a 20-year old divorced woman".

In general, parents, mainly mothers, socialize their daughters to be good wives and mothers. They also inspire them to be ready for marriage by telling them their own successful early arranged married life. As a result, most early married girls used to tell of their parents' positive influence on their motivation to get married early, which is in line with Bartz and Nye's (1970) explanations that, "the more satisfaction a girl anticipates from marriage, the more likely early marriage will occur and the more optimistic a girl's expectations and attitudes towards marriage, the more likely early marriage will occur." However, there are some girls who were not willing to get married early though they got married under social pressure to conform to the dominant gender norm, which gives high value to early marriage for girls. In short, girls in the study communities were and are still married at their early age either being positively influenced by their parents' successful married life or fearing the social sanctions on unmarried girls.

4.2.1.2 Social pressures to conform to social norms

Social pressures to conform to social norms are major socio-cultural causes for the persistence of early marriage for girls. Participants of FGDs held with all the three generations as well as key informants noted that girls should get married early due to prevailing social norms. The following FGD reveals the issue under discussion:

If we (parents) do not get our daughters married at the socially appropriate age for marriage (mostly below the age of 15), the community members will gossip about the unmarriageability of our daughters. The local people also do not have respect for parents who do not marry their children, especially, daughters at an early age with an elaborate wedding feast. As a result, we (parents) should get our daughter married before anyone points his/her finger at her (FGDs with parents, Kuahr and Zeng Mikael peasant communities, January-February 2010).

Our parents are worried about their social respect and good reputation unless they marry us at a younger age. They think that if we did not get married at a younger age, we would be considered as unwanted for marriage. This results in social stigma for unmarried girls and social disrespect for their parents. If parents lack social recognition and reputation in their community, nobody will ask us (daughters) for marriage. So, this is a great concern for our parents (FGDs with early married girls, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

Most parents consider early marriage as an acceptable social norm that should be followed by every community member. They also know that marrying daughters at an early age is illegal and that is why they arrange it in a hidden manner. Any community member who reports the practice arranged in a hidden manner to the legal bodies will be excluded from community-based social gatherings. Moreover, parents who failed to keep their promise to marry their children at an early age would be socially out-casted and be considered as unfaithful. So, there are a lot of social pressures that reinforce the practice of early marriage among community members (Community level key informants, Zeng Mikael, January 2010).

A woman informant also narrates her school-attending daughter's marriage at the age of 13 due to social pressure as follows:

I love my only daughter (Minalush) very much. She started formal education at a later age (at 10) since she had lots of household duties as the only female child among the three children in the family. We (I and my husband) were never concerned about her education since we gave priority to her contribution in reducing our work burden. Unfortunately, she got married at the age of 13 while she was attending grade 4 and moved to her in-laws' village. That was a horrible time for me because I was not able to manage the household duties alone. Since my daughter was good in women's activities, her husband and his parents loved her though they were not willing to send her to school. So, she dropped-out from grade 4 due to her marriage. Only God knows about her future fate. My main responsibility as a mother was to train her in women's roles to become a good wife (A young mother, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

An early married girl elucidates her experience in this regard as follows:

My parents forced me to get married at the age of 15 due to the social pressure to marry girls at their young age (mostly below 15). Since I was reaching 15 without getting married, the local community members were gossiping about why I did not get married at this age. Moreover, my parents' close relatives asked me 'why are you not getting married at this age while every girl in this locality is getting married at a younger age?' They also advised me by saying: 'You have to marry and form your own *goğgo*! Do not be foolish! Do not worry about education since the most important thing in this locality is your married life' (15 year old married girl (Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

In general, parents strongly believe that they would be highly respected by the local people when they marry off their children, especially their daughters, at the socially appropriate age. This implies that the local people still give priority to securing their own social prestige by marrying off their daughters early at the expense of their education.

4.2.1.3 Fear of the qomo-qär stigma

Because of the above-discussed social pressures, parents fear that their daughters could not get good husbands if they stay unmarried beyond the socially appropriate age for marriage. If a girl remains unmarried until the age of 15, she will be labelled as *qomo-qär* (literally ‘remaining standing’, signifying being undesirable for marriage). This stigma also extends to her parents and the family as a whole. Thus, the local people are very eager to marry off their daughters before they pass the socially appropriate marriage age because if the girl gets older (15 or above), nobody will ask her for marriage, as illustrated in the following case:

Economically well-to-do and socially respected families never ask an old girl for marriage because they believe that her capacity forbearing many children decreases during her marriage when she is old. So, local parents look for very young girls for their sons’ marriage just to have many grandchildren (FGDs with parents, Kuahr Mikael and Zeng Mikael, January-February 2010).

My father is a respected and wealthy person in our community and that is why everyone obliged him to marry me off at an early age. The community members also told him that I would be a *qomo-qär* if he did not arrange an early marriage for me. As a result, my father was under this social pressure to marry me off at an early age. I also did not have the power to escape from such a social norm (12-year old married girl, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

My parents feared that I would become *qomo-qär* and vulnerable to related social stigma. Hence, they pushed me into a marriage at the age of 12. At the initial stage of my married life, things were very difficult mainly due to my household responsibilities. Through time, I tried to manage both my household and reproductive responsibilities thanks to God. Fortunately, I gave birth to five children (three sons and two daughters) within 15 years of married life. Now, I [as a mother] also face the social pressure on marrying off the girls at a young age

since the community members have already started to ask me about ‘why aren’t you getting your two daughters (10 and 6 years old) married?’ It is very difficult to raise female children in this community (27 year old young mother, Kuahr Mikael, January 2010).

In both communities, girls beyond the age of 15 are considered as old ladies, unwanted for marriage (*qomo-qār*) unlike their male counterparts. So, parents strongly believe that their daughters should get married as early as possible.

4.2.1.4 Fear of loss of virginity and related stigmas

A girl should get married before the age of 15 mainly due to fear of loss of virginity and related stigmas. There is also a widely held belief that the longer a girl stays without getting married, the greater the shame and the higher risk of her engaging in casual sexual relationships since sex before and outside a marriage is still a taboo for girls. Furthermore, pregnancy out of marriage is the worst shame a girl can bring to her parents, which results in loss of parents’ honor and prestige. Thus, marrying off girls at an early age means protecting them from premarital sex, loss of virginity and unwanted pregnancy on one hand and ensuring her family’s honor and prestige on the other.

In both the study communities where almost all residents are followers of Orthodox Christianity, a girl is expected to be a virgin at marriage and her purity is even more appreciated for not getting pregnant or giving birth before marriage, since having a child out of wedlock reduces her chances of ever marrying. This is a major reason for marrying girls early, as stated by most elderly members of the community, including religious leaders who strongly argue against premarital sex as well as pregnancy before marriage. This is in line with Guday’s (2005) argument that socio-cultural values related to ‘femininity’ and ‘virginity’ have contributed to the comparatively higher prevalence rate of early marriage among girls.

4.2.1.5 Parents’ desire to continue their family line

In this study, plenty of cases show that parents’ desire to continue their family line is one of the key drivers of early marriage for girls. Childbearing contributes significantly to a woman’s social identity, a first birth proves her fertility and reduces the anxiety surrounding family continuance. Parents’ desire to have a large family also puts pressure on daughters to give birth early. Thus, young girls are forced to enter into marriage to give birth to as many children as possible. As a result, married children who gave many births received a lot of blessing from their parents for continuing their family line. Beside, parents aspire to have their children bear many grandchildren, considered as a great pride

to the family. As a result, for most parents, the desire to have many grandchildren is considered as a primary reason to make decisions favoring early marriage. The following case demonstrates this.

Case Study 2

Hidden Early Marriage to Continue Parents' Family Line

My name is Alemitu. I am 17 years old. When I was about 11, I asked my father to send me to school like other girls in our locality. My father sent me to school after many hesitations since he had already promised to marry me to the son of his close friend in our village when I was 7 just to see the continuity of his family line. When I reached 14, both families believed that I would be able to shoulder household duties and to give birth. My father forced me to marry a 28-year-old boy under the cover of a religious feast (Tir Mikael şabal). At that time, I was in grade 3, but I stopped going to school during my wedding feast arranged in a hidden manner. Fifteen days after the secret marriage arrangement, I was forced to go to my husband's home. Before my marriage, both my father and my father-in-law made a verbal agreement about my schooling. However, both my husband and my in-laws were not willing to send me to school after my marriage due to a lot of household chores such as cooking, fetching water and preparing animal dung for household fuel consumption. In the meantime, the school principal got information about my marriage and forced my husband to send me to school. Then, under pressure from the school principal, my husband allowed me to continue with my formal education (grade 3) after six months' absence. Unfortunately, I became pregnant and was unable to continue attending school. Then I gave birth to a baby girl (now 1-year-old) and my hidden marriage became public since there is no legal case to answer after giving birth. These made both my husband and his parents very happy (17 year old mother, 3rd grade drop-out, Zeng Mikael, January 2010).

The above case shows that girls in this locality are encouraged to attend formal school through the school principal's follow up. The local people are well-aware of the need to send their daughters to formal school as well as the illegality of marrying off their daughters before the age of 18. To avoid the latter, local community members designed a hidden way of arranging early marriage for their school-age or even school-attending daughters. The concerned local officials also publicize early marriage arranged in a hidden manner by approving it after the young wife gives birth. In this regard, one justice office key informant stated, "the law does not force early married spouses to be divorced after giving birth because the new-born child will lose his protectors."

The following case further illustrates parents' strong desire to continue their family line as a major driver of early marriage.

I never attended school since I had lots of household duties at home. My father forced me to get married with his best friend's son (a 26-year-old boy) while I was 14. My marriage was arranged in the name of my dead paternal grandmother's *täzkär* (memorial feast) and many people, including peasant association officials, were invited. After the hidden wedding ceremony, I went to my husband's family and got pregnant after six months. I gave my first birth with the support of my mother and the traditional birth attendant at my parent's home. My husband and his parents were very happy since the hidden marriage has become public after I gave birth and their family line continues with the birth of a new child. I also eventually accepted my forced marriage for the sake of my child. My child is my wealth and everything. I am nothing without my child (15 and half year old out-of-school mother, Kuahr Mikael, January 2010).

This case study suggests that early arranged marriage can be sustained through the birth of children. Girls/women carry forward every family relationship after giving birth by tolerating their sufferings just for the sake of their children.

4.2.1.6 Parents' desire to have male protectors for their daughters

Parents believe that their daughters' life should be protected by male protectors (husbands from respected families) to be secured through early marriage. According to the local tradition, a woman is primarily respected through her husband and then through her children, particularly through sons. This is in line with Sweetman's (2003:5) argument that, "women are expected to have respect, status and resources in a community when they give birth after marriage. Consequently, marriage transforms women from 'nobodies' to 'homebodies'. Thus, the social identity they acquire is based on their attachment to their husbands."

A girl starts the life of ‘womanhood’ through early marriage, which is a major means of wealth accumulation because early married partners can earn more wealth in terms of cattle, land, and agricultural products. They can save money and be in a better condition, respected in their future life compared to their unmarried counterparts. According to Hoben (1973), it is hoped that the livestock of the marrying spouses will multiply, children will be born and the household will obtain control over an increasing amount of land.

The following case shows parents’ desire to have a male guardian for their daughters before they pass away.

Case Study 3

Hidden Early Marriage to Have a Male Protector for a Daughter

I have four children (two daughters and two sons). The eldest child (a girl) is 14 years old and her younger sister is 12. The two sons are 10 and 8 years old, respectively. I was eager to see my two daughters’ marriage before I pass away. A year ago, I had a car accident when I travelled to Bahir Dar. I was severely injured and so worried about my death before I arranged my children’s (especially my daughters’) future. So, I decided to get married my two daughters in the name of celebrating a day that saved my life from death during the car accident a year ago. My two daughters (14 and 12 years old) were attending 4th and 2nd grades, respectively. The villagers were quietly informed about the hidden wedding ceremony. However, the Woreda officials, local school principals, agricultural development workers and other officials who had been visiting the peasant association were not aware of its being a wedding feast though they were invited to attend the feast. Of course, it was not an uncommon thing to cheat the local officials (including the police and justice officials) in this manner. Three weeks after the hidden wedding feast, my two daughters went to their respective in-laws’ home. Both of them missed school for 21 days during their wedding ceremony and they did not continue their formal schooling after they went to their respective in-laws’ villages. Of course, in arranging their marriage in a hidden manner, there was an agreement with their respective father-in-laws to allow them to continue with their education. However, my main concern was to get them married and to have male protectors for my daughters before I passed away (A 40-year-old man, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

An elderly woman informant from one of the study communities also confirms this situation as follows:

In our community, most parents who are marrying off their school-attending daughters at an early age make negotiations and agree on the child brides' education and when should they start sexual intercourse with their husbands, give birth, and live together with their husbands in their own *goğğo*. But, it is difficult to fulfil even one of the agreements because most negotiations between the two marrying families are just ways of making the brides feel at ease about the marriage arranged by their parents (Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

In general, most arranged early marriages aimed at securing male protectors for young girls have negative consequences on their education, health and overall development.

4.2.2 The Negative Consequence of Early Marriage

The following case told by an elder brother exemplifies one negative consequence of early marriage due to early pregnancy complications.

I was born and brought up in Zeng Mikael. My mother and father have six children including myself. I am the first child in the family, and my mother started to give birth while she was 15, with no delivery problem at the time. Fortunately, my uncle took me to the nearby town where I started to follow my formal education. But the rest of my siblings did not get any opportunity to attend formal education at all, and all got married and gave births.

My mother feels that she lives with no problem and views her marriage at an early age as a good opportunity. Hence, she accepted any marriage proposal of my siblings which came through our father. Unfortunately, I lost my beloved sister due to early marriage and pregnancy-related health complications. My father promised her away in a marriage alliance when she was five and a half year-old child. His main reason for the marriage alliance was that her father-in-law was a highly respected priest in our locality. My father had a good relationship with this priest and it was just to strengthen this relationship that he promised to give my sister (Sinafiksh) to his son (Alamrew).

Then the wedding ceremony preparation for Sinafiksh started. She was not informed about what was going on. Next, when Sinafiksh was 10 years old, the hidden marriage took place in the name of celebrating St. Mikael's day. Though Sinafiksh was crying when she knew that she was going to get married, the response given to her was a local saying '*wäg näwə sidaru maləqäs*' (it is a custom to cry when one is wedded). After the hidden wedding ceremony, Sinafiksh was forced to go to her husband's family.

She lived together with her husband for two years. After two years, I got a message that Sinafiksh was very ill. When I reached there and saw her, she had lost her childhood beauty. I started crying and took her to the nearby health center. The nurses saw her and told me to take her to Debre Tabor hospital or Woreta health center for further treatment. While taking her to Debre Tabor hospital, I saw that she could not control her urine. I was frustrated and wished for my death. Then the doctors in Debre Tabor hospital saw her and they said that her health problem might be ‘fistula’. They advised us to take her to Bahir Dar Hamlin fistula center.

The Bahir Dar Hamlin fistula center gave her treatment and we were told that she could get treatment at Woreta fistula center at any time when she feels further pain. She was also told not to have any sexual intercourse. After we stayed for four weeks at Bahir Dar Hamlin fistula center, I took her back to our parents’ home for better care, and I returned to my work place by informing my parents to call me if she had any strange feeling.

After two months, the villagers insisted that it was not good to separate her from her husband from a respected family. After much hesitation, my father let her go to her in-laws’ village by warning her husband not to have sex with her. Her husband tried to keep his promise for a few months, but he failed to keep it after a while. As a result, she became pregnant. When I heard this misfortune I told them that she would have to go to hospital to check her health status. But her father in-law (a priest) refused and said that St. Mikael would protect her from any evil things or misfortunes. I was powerless to do anything and I came back home. After four months into her pregnancy, her womb could not carry the fetus and this resulted in excessive bleeding. We took her to the nearby town, where the health center workers saw her and wrote a referral letter to Bahir Dar hospital. Unfortunately, on the way to Bahir Dar, just a few kilo meters to Woreta town, Sinafiksh took her last breath at the age of 14. The two marrying families feel quite proud of the fact that they were able to keep their promise and consider Sinafiksh’s early marriage-related health complications leading to her death as the will of God (A local school teacher informant, Zeng Mikael, January 2010).

4.2.3. Female Household Head’s Desire to Get Male Protection and Extra Farm Labor

In the study communities, females become household heads when they get divorced or when their husbands pass away. In most cases, a land-rich widowed woman who does not have a grownup son to take over the farm activity should marry off her daughter to get male protection and farm labor support. W/ro Bizuye’s story illustrates this issue.

I have three children (two daughters and one son) from my husband who passed away six years ago. The older girl (20 years old) got married at the age of 14, before my husband's death and she now lives with her husband and her two children in her in-laws' village. After my husband's death, I was looking for a male protector and labor support by marrying off my second daughter (Sinkinesh, 15 years old) since my son was only 11 years old. My younger daughter's marriage took place in a very systematic and hidden manner. Before the actual wedding ceremony, my son-in-law came to my home and started to do farm work by living with us as one of my household members. Then the actual wedding ceremony was held in the name of my deceased husband's memorial feast (*tāzkār*) and then Sinkinesh started to live with her husband in their own *goḡḡo* in my homestead. Now, my homestead is protected by my son-in-law (Gizew), who is fully responsible for the farm activities. He is the son of a respected person (*Merigeta Aberawork*) who was my deceased husband's best friend. I will hold an elaborate wedding feast when my daughter gives birth" (A 40-yearold widowed mother, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

The aforementioned case is not a common type of marriage arrangement in both the study communities as the bride is expected to go to her in-laws' home after marriage. Regarding this, the bride (Sinkinesh) adds the following:

My mother raised me both as a father and a mother. After the death of my father it was difficult for a farming household to sustain its livelihood without male labor support. When my mother told me her plan about my marriage, I cried. But she tried to convince me by saying that her motive behind my marriage was just to get a male protection for our family and to have labor support. She also told me that he was the son of my deceased father's best friend. Finally, I agreed with her plan to marry me in a hidden manner and collaborated with her in all ways (A 15-year-old married out-of-school half-orphan girl, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

Here it should be noted that the recruited husband has the duty of protecting his mother-in-law's homestead and he is responsible for his own married life within the same homestead. In general, men in the study peasant communities are viewed as dependable for the well-being of a family in terms of providing protection as well as farm labor support. This argument has been supported by Alemante's (2004) and Guday's (2005) ethnographic findings.

4.2.4. Socio-Economic Status and Family Poverty

In this study, 'socio-economic status' refers to the two marrying families' social position (being measured through social prestige and power in the local community) and wealth

status (being measured through the size of the landholding and possession of livestock, mainly oxen used for ploughing). Those who have a relatively large farmland and at least a pair of oxen are considered as economically better-off (rich) families, whereas those who have neither farmland nor oxen are considered as relatively worse-off (poor) families. Most parents who arranged early marriage for their children in the two peasant communities belong to the relatively “wealthy” (rich in land and oxen) social group. Girls from families with a relatively ‘high socio-economic status’ are more likely to marry early than do those from families with a relatively ‘low socio-economic status.’ Moreover, the early marriage alliance is mostly between families with equal socio-economic status. On the contrary, girls who marry late are perceived as having poor parents with ‘low social status’ though there are some rare cases of early marriage of girls from poor families (see Mare’s case study). In this connection, participants of FGDs argue as follows:

Nobody asks girls from a poor family for marriage. Their fate is to remain single or to continue their formal education. Poor families have little to prepare wedding feasts. Girls from economically well-to-do families, however, are highly sought in marriage and their parents have the means to prepare their wedding feasts (FGDs with household head parents, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

If a girl is from a poor family, she is undesirable for early marriage and may wait for a husband until her 20s. This is a shame for her and her family members because this indicates that she is from a family with “low economic status”. However, if she is from a rich or economically well-off family, there are lots of proposals for marriage from different angles and her family members will be proud of this. In this community, being ‘poor’ or ‘rich’ is determined by different factors such as social status, economic wealth, and number of children/siblings and other family members or close relatives’. For instance, those who have many family members or relatives have a good social acceptance and they are considered as *təkāšša dāndana* (literally broad-shouldered, signifying having many defending family members or relatives). In short, being able to arrange early marriage for girls is a major indicator of families’ social and economic status (FGDs with council of elders, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

The above statements show that family poverty is not the major driver of early marriage among most members of the study communities contrary to previous studies and national surveys, which showed that poverty and early marriage are intertwined or the former fuels the latter. However, the following case is a rare instance of poverty as the cause of early marriage

Case Study 4: Poverty as a Cause for Arranging Early Marriage

This case study is about a girl (Mare, 10 years old) who got married at an early age as a housemaid. Before her marriage, Mare has been living in poverty with her divorced mother (Fenta) in a small village. Her father had divorced her mother and left her when she was four years old. Since her mother was unable to fulfill all the basic needs for their livelihood alone, she decided to marry off Mare in a hidden manner as a housemaid to her husband (Worku)'s well-to-do family who were highly respected by the local people for their generosity. Fenta did not want to miss this chance and make her daughter live a destitute life like herself. Fenta tells her story as follows:

My life was very frustrating because of my father's selection of the wrong mate for me. I got married when I was 15. Now, I am 26. My husband was not a good person. He went to Woreta every Saturday and used to drink local alcohol there. After that he used to beat me. Because of his beating I was divorced twice. After the first divorce, I came back to my parents' home and they settled the situation through *agabi shimagilewoch* (three elderly male marriage negotiators). But I was unable to continue my life in this manner and I preferred to make a final divorce with him when Mare was four years old. In general, my life experience is painful and divorce at an early age is quite hard. That is why I decided to marry off my daughter to a 'selected' husband from a well-to-do family in a hidden manner (26 year old divorced mother, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

Her daughter (Mare) also describes the situation as follows:

When I think that my mother has sacrificed a lot to raise me, I get extremely touched. I cannot forget what she has done for me. So, I am always doing what my mother orders me to do, and she is quite correct in every decision she makes. Initially, I was not willing to get married as a housemaid. But my mother tried her best to convince me by saying that the boy who was going to marry me was from

a rich family and I should not miss this opportunity to start a good life. Finally, I agreed to cooperate with my mother's plan. Now, my married life is somewhat good. My in-laws are very eager to see my first birth and to start living with my husband in our own *goğgo* in their homestead (10 year old girl married in the as a housemaid to her husband's family, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

According to Fenta (the divorced mother), when the marriage was arranged in a hidden manner, the local gender worker reported the case to the local justice and police officials. Then both the mother and the suspected husband (Worku) were asked to appear at the court. Both of them pretended that Mare was a housemaid, not a wife. The mother (Fenta) defended the case by saying that she is a divorced poor woman. So, she is unable to meet all basic needs of her daughter alone. The judge then ordered Fenta to present her daughter (Mare) at the next court proceeding. Mare appeared at the court and defended her mother's decision by saying that she did not have a father and her destitute mother is unable to support her. Thus, she was obliged to sustain her life by working as a housemaid in Worku's parents' home. Finally, the court let all of them (Mare, Fenta and Worku) free. Fenta elaborates the situation as follows:

In this peasant association, everything is amazing and it is unfair that we even cannot marry off our children. Who orders me to do this or that about the fate of my daughter? Nobody, only me and me alone! When I decided to marry off my daughter in a hidden manner, as every parent in this locality does, the so-called 'gender worker'¹ accused me because I did not have a good relationship with this her. Thanks to God I was let free after the two court appearances (26 year-old divorced poor woman, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

4.2.5. Parents' Loss of Hope in Formal Education

Some parents do not have the intention to send their children to the local primary school (grades 1-8). The following report from extended interviews with two elderly key informants (a man and a woman) and two out-of-school early married girls illustrates attitudes towards formal education:

I have four children. I am not much interested in letting them attend formal school because they will benefit nothing from it. Of course, I have tried to send my elder son to school. But he stopped attending because he was not happy with it and our harvest declined. Since then I have started advising my children to be strong

¹During the fieldwork, there was no other hidden early marriage arrangement case reported either to the police or to other local government officials though there were numerous cases besides Mare's.

farmers instead of going to formal schools. Nowadays, thanks to God, we (family members) are able to produce three times a year and our life is getting better than those who send their children to school; it is even much better than those who finished school and have their own job (68 year old woman, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

I encourage my children to marry at an early age and give as many births as possible. As an eldest son, I enjoyed respect and took a guardianship role in my parents' household. I am among the few community members who are able to have an influential and prestigious socio-economic status. For me, formal education adds nothing to my current social and economic status. I also did not want to send my children to school. Instead, I arranged early marriages for three of my children and others have been promised in marriage. I never advise them to think about formal education. Some of my married children have already established their own *goḡḡo* and given births (An elder male informant, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

My parents were keen to marry me off at an early age and they told me that there is no life other than this. As a result, I agreed to get married at the age of 14 because my parents would never let me go to school until my marriage. Before my marriage, I was fully involved in domestic activities at my parents' home and did not ask my parents to send me to the local school because they told me that formal schooling was tiresome and it has a very slow return. Above all, I have wealthy parents and they never let me down. They always used to advise me not to think about formal schooling since there are no well-educated people who can serve as positive role models in our village (14 year old out-of-school married girl, Zeng Mikael, February 2010).

I never went to a school because my father had no interest in formal education. My father is one of the courageous and respected individuals in our village. There was a strong pressure from the villagers on my father to marry me off since he is a relatively wealthy person. Finally, my father agreed to marry me off and I got married in the week before the start of the Ethiopian Easter fasting season (*qəbāla*) in a hidden manner in the name of my beloved deceased paternal grandfather's memorial feast (*täzkär*). Nobody reported this case to the local police or to other

local government officials because my father is very popular and highly respected in our community (13 year-old out-of-school married girl, Kuahr Mikael, January 2010).

In general, most parents prefer to arrange early marriages for their children, especially for daughters, instead of getting them educated. The following are the major reasons: First, most uneducated parents, mainly mothers, are not aware of the value of educating their daughters due to the absence of well-educated and successful females who could be positive role models except health extension workers and agricultural extension development workers. Second, most parents lose hope in the slow returns of formal schooling due to the presence of a few unemployed college graduate boys and some 10th and 12th grade completes (more boys and a few girls) who were not able to continue with their education due to their low academic performance. Third, the income and living condition of educated government civil servants such as health extension workers, agricultural extension development workers and peasant association leaders in both communities did not encourage/motivate the local people to educate their children. Fourth, some parents who sent their daughters to the local primary schools do not allow them to continue their education in secondary schools far from their locality because they fear that their daughters might be exposed to pre-marital sex and unwanted pregnancy, which leads to drop-out of many girls from primary school to get married. This is in line with UNICEF's (2001:11) statement that, "while there has been a recent drive to increase participation of girls in basic education, the more significant gender gap is at the secondary level".

Overall, the findings of the study discussed in this sub-section are in line with Bartz and Nye's (1970) statement that "the less interest or ability a boy or a girl has in pursuing formal education, the more likely early marriage will occur and the lower the educational level of a girl's parents, the more likely early marriage will occur."

4.3. Role of Local Institutions in Hidden Early Marriages

4.3.1 Promoting Role of Community-Based Organizations

Local community-based organizations (CBOs) include social gatherings and associations (such as *mahābār*), religious feasts (such as *ṣābal* and *zākār*) and memorial feasts (such as *tāzkār*). These play a significant role in promoting early marriages; they are used by the local people to conceal early marriage wedding feasts from *Woreda* officials such as Women's Affairs and Justice Officers, and grassroots-level gender workers (such as women affairs focal persons) and school principals and female students' advising committee representatives.

Religious leaders or father-confessors also play a significant role in facilitating the hidden arrangements of early marriage since they bless all sorts of arranged marriages. Particularly, the local religious feasts as well as *täzkärs* are the major fora used by the local communities to arrange early marriages in a hidden manner. Accordingly, every member of the local community collaborates to hide early marriage arrangements because it is a common social practice though the law is against it. Participants of FGDs argued that:

Early marriage is a visible act for us (community members) and an invisible act for different government bodies, including the women's affairs, police and justice officials. In our locality, nobody gives information to these bodies because he/she will be out casted from the community. As a result, there is no clue about early marriages arranged in a hidden manner in our locality (FGDs with council of elders, Kuahr Mikael, February 2010).

The local social and religious gatherings as well as *täzkärs* facilitate the hidden arrangements of early marriages. The actors of the local social and religious institutions are also major gatekeepers of local social norms promoting early marriage. As a result, it would be very difficult to prevent the practice of early marriage and enforce the formal law against it at the grassroots-level without changing the social structure and the attitude of its gatekeepers, mainly community and religious leaders.

4.3.2. Preventive Role of Local Governmental Institutions

The major local government institutions involved in the prevention of early marriage as well as enforcement of the formal law legislating against the practice are the Fogera *Woreda* Women Affairs Office and the Fogera *Woreda* Justice Office.

4.3.2.1. The role of Fogera Woreda Women Affairs Office

During the fieldwork conducted between January-February 2010, the Fogera *Woreda* Women Affairs Office (FWWAO) has been working hard to prevent early marriage arrangements and enforce the law against the practice in collaboration with grassroots-level stakeholders such as local peasant association leaders, gender activists (women affairs' focal persons), school principals, female students' advisory committee, and health extension workers. However, the FWAO could not play its role to the extent needed because some of the collaborating stakeholders, mainly peasant association leaders and gender activists, were not committed to enforcing the law at the community level partly due to social pressures arising from being natives of the local community. The following

statements show the problem of preventing the hidden early marriage arrangements at the grassroots level:

Preventing the hidden arrangement of early marriage at the grassroots level is a very difficult task because everybody, including local-level peasant association leaders, is deeply involved in local social and religious associations used for arranging early marriage in a hidden manner. As a result, no one is willing to provide us (the FWWA officials) with accurate information about the practice of arranging early marriage in a hidden manner. Sometimes, when the office obtains an accurate information about who is going to arrange it at a specific locality, the practice will take place at a different locality or the local people conceal the practice in the name of religious and social gatherings (such as *tāzkār* and *mahābār*). Thus, it is very difficult to prevent the hidden arrangements of early marriage in this locality where the local people, including the local peasant association leaders, are not committed to reporting the practice due to their loyalty to social values and norms promoting the practice (A key informant from FWWAO at Woreta, January 2010).

The above key informant further notes:

The FWWAO has assigned gender activists in all peasant associations in order to prevent the multifaceted hidden arrangements of early marriage. However, these gender activists are not willing to report the practice to our office. Even more surprisingly, these gender activists are engaged in marrying off their own daughters at an early age in the same pattern. So, these activists, who are supposed to work against early marriage collaborate with the local people when they arrange early marriages by disguising the practice from the local-level government bodies, mainly the Justice Officials.

4.3.2.2. The role of Fogera Woreda Justice Office

The Fogera *Woreda* Justice Office (FWJO), in collaboration with the *Woreda's* police, has been working to prevent early marriage through the information obtained from local school-attending children (early married girls or their friends) and other concerned bodies (individuals, police, school teachers, and health extension workers). However, according to the key informant from the FWJO in Woreta, the office has encountered the following challenges.

First, the Amhara National Regional State has its own legal codes to prevent early marriage. One of the codes states that “early marriages should be stopped 15 days before the wedding takes place.” However, early marriages in this locality take place in a hidden manner so that information about when it is going to be arranged is obtained late which

makes the office's act to stop early marriage 'illegal'. However, sometimes the office violates this code to help early married girls by stopping their planned marriage any time, including the wedding day."

Second, there is no accurate estimation of the age of early married girls, which might make girls vulnerable to early marriage. More specifically, during the proceedings of cases in the court room, when the judges request for the confirmation of the age of the girl from the hospital or health center, the health institution itself tries to estimate the girl's age since it does not know the accurate age of the girl, which also leaves room for the judge to estimate the accurate age of the girl who is going to get married. In other words, the problem of knowing the accurate age of girls by the local health institutions and judges leads to the formalization or legalization of the marriage of underage girls.

Third, sometimes girls get married in a hidden manner and their marriage becomes public when they get pregnant or give birth. During this time, it is difficult to prosecute the husband as his imprisonment will leave the girl with no one to support her.

Fourth, the major challenge is the problem that each and every member of the community does not want to expose himself/herself by reporting the hidden arrangement of early marriage by others since such an action could result in the former's social exclusion.

In general, early marriage practice persists in a much hidden form in the children's generation compared to their grandparents' and parents' generations as the marrying families and community members conceal the practice mainly through social and religious feasts. Above all, the local community and religious leaders as well as other members of the community facilitate the hidden practice of early marriage though they know that it is against the law. This clearly shows the gap between the socio-cultural norms as well as economic factors reinforcing the practice of early marriage in a hidden manner and that of the formal law prohibiting it.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study investigated the changing and hidden patterns of early marriage arrangements across three generations (grandparents, parents and children) among the study communities and found that:

- (1) During the grandparents' generation, there were early marriage arrangements between families of equal social and economic status through elaborate public

wedding feasts. The practice of early marriage was mainly influenced by social, economic, political and religious values prevailing during the imperial regime.

- (2) During the parents' generation, the marriage arrangement procedures were similar to those of the grandparents' generation though religion did not play a significant role in the marriage arrangement process during the *Derg* regime due to its socialist ideology. Moreover, the wedding feasts started to decrease both in quality and quantity as a manifestation of the social, economic, political and legal reforms (Alemante 2004). Furthermore, according to elderly local key informants, the social, economic and political insecurities during the *Derg* regime exacerbated the prevalence of the practice of early marriage. As a result, the marriage age of both girls and boys started to decline through time.
- (3) During the children's generation the age at first marriage for both girls and boys had dropped from that of the parents' generation, which was 10-13 for the bride and 18-20 for the groom (Hoben 1973). This finding is also supported by the findings of related ethnographic studies (such as Alemante 2004 and Guday 2005). Accordingly, the age at first marriage dropped from 12 to 9 years for girls and from 18 to 12 years for boys (Alemante 2004) and the average age at first marriage for the mothers' generation was 11, whereas it was 8 years for the daughters' generation (Guday 2005). Moreover, the public attendance of wedding feasts of early married girls has been changed into the hidden marriage alliance between two families with equal social and economic status mainly through social and religious gatherings.

The study further explored the reasons why parents arrange early marriage for their children, mainly for daughters, in a hidden manner and identified the following major factors contributing to the persistence of the practice:

- (1) *Socio-cultural factors* involving gender-specific socialization of children, social pressures to conform to social norms, fear of the *qomo-qār* stigma, fear of loss of virginity and related stigmas, parents' desire to continue their family line, and parents' desire to have a male protector for their daughter. Some land rich female household heads also arranged an early marriage for their daughters mainly to get male protection and farm labor support (see case studies).
- (2) *Socio-economic status and poverty of family*: Girls from families with a relatively 'high socio-economic status' are more likely to marry early than those from families with a relatively 'low socio-economic status.' Girls who marry late are perceived as having poor parents with 'low social status' though there are some rare cases of girls from poor families marrying early. This study found that family poverty is not the major driver of early marriage among most members of

these communities contrary to previous studies and national surveys, which showed that poverty and early marriage are intertwined or the former fuels the latter.

- (3) *Parents' lack of faith in formal education:* Parents prefer to arrange early marriage for their children, especially for daughters, instead of educating them mainly due to the presence of a few unemployed college graduate boys and some 10th and 12th grade completes (more boys and a few girls) who were not able to continue with their education. Moreover, the low salary and living condition of local government civil servants such as school teachers, health extension workers, and agricultural extension development workers in both communities do not motivate the local people to educate their children. Furthermore, some parents who have already sent their daughters to the local primary schools do not allow them to continue their education in secondary schools far from their locality due to fear of their being exposed to premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy, which reinforces drop-out of many girls from primary school to get married.

Finally, the study examined the roles of local community-based organizations and government institutions in the hidden arrangement of early marriage and found that: (1) The local community-based organizations, mainly social and religious associations, are major fora used by the local communities to arrange early marriages in a hidden manner. More specifically, religious leaders/fathers play a significant role in facilitating the hidden arrangements of early marriage for they bless all sorts of arranged marriages. (2) The local government institutions, mainly Fogera *Woreda* Women's Affairs and Justice Offices, were involved in the prevention of early marriage as well as the enforcement of the law against the practice. The major collaborative stakeholders working with these offices were local school principals and female students' advisory committee, gender activists, peasant association leaders and health extension workers. However, some of these stakeholders such as gender activists and peasant association leaders, who are supposed to prevent early marriage arrangements, did not have the commitment to enforce the law at the community level partly due to social pressures such as being local natives. Moreover, the local community members were also unwilling to report the hidden arrangement of early marriage to the justice office mainly due to fear of social sanctions.

5.2. Concluding Remarks

Based on the above key findings, the study presents the following concluding remarks.

First, the study showed that the age at first marriage for both girls and boys is decreasing and the public attendance of wedding feasts of early married girls has been changed into hidden marriage arrangements under the guise of social and religious gatherings.

Second, parents are marrying off their children, mainly their daughters, at a very young age in a hidden manner due to complex and inter-related socio-cultural and economic factors similar to the grandparents' and parents' generations, except for some newly emerging factors mainly related to the local peoples' lack of faith in formal education. Though most of the reviewed studies considered early marriage as a 'backward', 'traditional' and 'harmful practice' and the regional and federal laws forbid it, local community members still have valid justifications and practical explanations for the prevalence of hidden arrangements of early marriage. Moreover, the local community members do not consider early marriage of girls as a violation of their rights as children though they are well-aware of the formal law against child marriage.

Third, the law against early marriage is not effectively enforced or implemented because the local level government officials, mainly peasant association leaders and gender activists, lack strong commitment to enforce it since they are part and parcel of the local community members. This implies that the existence of the law cannot guarantee the "abolishment" of early marriage from the society. Instead, it paves the way for arranging early marriage in a hidden manner through several social gatherings and religious ceremonies.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the major findings and their implications, this study recommends the following points for possible intervention and future research.

5.3.1. Areas for Possible Intervention

In the communities, the local social and religious institutions are the major fora used to arrange early marriage in a hidden manner. In order to effectively prevent the practice of early marriage and enforce the law at the grassroots level, there is a need for changing the social structure and attitudes of the local social gatekeepers (mainly local community and religious leaders) by establishing a sustainable rewarding mechanism for those locally influential leaders who could bring positive changes in the practice.

The culture of silence and secrecy that prevails in the communities also has a negative influence on the would-be child brides because the culture discourages them from reporting and/or disclosing early and forced marriage arranged by parents or other relatives, mainly grandparents. The social stigma attached to going public and disclosing

the hidden arrangements of early marriage on young girls has made the conditions even worse and many children, particularly young girls, would opt to remain silent victims of the practice. Even the local community members, including the local gender activists and peasant association leaders, would in many circumstances prefer to remain silent and not be willing to expose the practice due to fear of social exclusion from their community. In this regard, there is a need for working closely with community-based organizations (CBOs) and the local social structure gatekeepers to change the attitude of parents towards a culture which promotes open dialogues with children on their rights and values of girls' education as well as the need to protect girls from early and forced marriages. There is also a strong need to arrange continuous awareness raising trainings about the negative effects of early marriage on the overall development of children in general and girls in particular for parents through awareness campaigns to be supported by concrete mobilization of local religious and community leaders, who are the major social structure gatekeepers.

The government institutions responsible for enforcing the law against early marriage both at the *Woreda* and peasant community levels lack human resources and essential facilities. This implies the need for providing appropriate trainings to the police, public prosecutors, women's affairs officers, gender activists, peasant association leaders and other responsible bodies at all levels.

5.3.2. Areas for Future Research

The focus of this study was mainly on investigating and analyzing the reasons behind the changing and hidden aspects of early marriage across three generations among two peasant communities of Fogera *Woreda* of South Gondar in Amhara Region. Hence, the prevalence and extent of the hidden arrangements of early marriage among other peasant communities of Amhara Region were not addressed by this study. Therefore, there is a need for conducting further study on these issues in other peasant communities of Amhara Region and elsewhere.

This study also mainly focused on exploring the roles of the concerned government officials at *Woreda* and grassroots levels in preventing the hidden arrangements of early marriage and in enforcing the law. However, the clash between the local socio-cultural values and economic factors promoting the hidden arrangements of early marriage and that of the law calls for further study to address problems related to the effective enforcement of the law.

Finally, we believe that integrating the findings of this study with other future studies will enable concerned bodies to develop a comprehensive strategy and policy on how to prevent the hidden arrangements of early marriage in Amhara Region, where the practice is still highly prevalent.

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Perceived Parental Support and Psychological Wellbeing among Children Living with Stepparents

Belay Tefera and Matewos Gena

Abstract

Stepfamily is a form of reconstituted family set up that has been in place ever since the advent of the nuclear/conjugal family. It has, however, been on incline across time and, hence, attracted the attention of scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. Yet, the situation of reconstituted families and its impact on stepchildren has been least investigated in Ethiopia and such children are not visible in schools, intervention sites, and related other settings. This study was, therefore, conceived to shed light on this pressing gap. It attempted to examine perceived parental (academic, material, and emotional) support and psychological wellbeing (self-esteem and social competence) to draw implications for intervention. It was conducted with children drawn from three government schools in Shiromeda area of Addis Ababa. A sample of 360 school-aged children (consisting of those living with their own biological parents, a mother and stepfather, and a father and stepmother) was selected and compared in order to understand the possible impacts of step-parenting. A Likert-type scale was developed for children to rate their perceived experiences. The findings indicated that stepchildren had significantly lower support and psychological wellbeing than children with biological parents. It was also noted that the level of parental support was significantly and positively correlated with psychological wellbeing. Gender and age (main and interaction) effects were found, unlike findings in previous research, to make non-significant differences in both perceived parental support as well as psychological wellbeing. Recommendations were forwarded as to how to address the concerns of the children from different perspectives including legal implications. Finally, a further line of inquiry was suggested to better address some of the gaps noted in this research.

Key Words: Stepfamily, step-parenting, stepchildren, stepmother, stepfather.

1. INTRODUCTION

Childhood is commonly considered as a foundation period in human development. Different psychological and sociological theories expound that this stage is so critical for latter development outcomes (Cartwright, 2010) that parents, communities, institutions, and governments need to put child-friendly environment, interaction, and services in place to ensure a healthy start in life. Different national and international instruments were, therefore, designed not only to cater for children's basic needs but also to ensure that the satisfaction of these needs is considered the rights of children. The UNCRC and its African version, ACRWC, are the most widely ratified conventions that recognize every child's right to a standard of living that is conducive for (1) survival and development (Article 6), (2) respecting the best interest of the child (Article 3), (3) providing equal opportunities to all children regardless of their origin, birth, gender, social class, religion, race or any other status (Article 2), and (4) giving children the opportunity and freedom to express their views on all matters affecting their life (Article 12).

The Convention also considers the family as an important natural matrix of growth for the child, devoting several of its articles to the child's rights to a family life, as well as to the fact that child rights should be respected within the family set up (Ochaíta & Espinosa, 2002). It sets out the right for proper direction and guidance by parents or other family members as provided for by local custom (Article 5), proper rearing by their parents, in accordance with the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child (Article 18), protection from physical and psychological risks resulting from the non-existence or poor functioning of the family system (Articles 19 to 21), and specifically from all forms of maltreatment, exploitation, and abuse (Article 19).

These conventions as well as theories and research investigations in the field of child development, child rights and child protection have brought to the fore the vulnerabilities of different groups of children and the need to give them special provisions. Orphaned children, street children, institutionalized children, HIV-affected children, war-displaced children, sexually abused children and many others were not only among the ones extensively investigated even in the Ethiopian context but are also characteristically visible to NGO support, advocacy groups, and other civil societies. This is unlike stepchildren in Ethiopia whose demographics, let alone the rest of their other important characteristic features, remain unknown. However, given that high divorce rates create a large pool of candidates for remarriage (Cartwright, 2005), and that about three-quarters of divorced people (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994) remarry, it is believed that an estimated 45% of all first marriages ending in divorce in Ethiopia¹ (Tilson & Larsen, 2000, p.360) are likely to lead to the formation of stepfamilies. This implies that a considerable proportion of children in Ethiopia are brought up in stepfamilies.

Experiences show that stepfamilies and stepchildren are in fact of diverse types. They include children who live in single-parent families but have a remarried noncustodial parent (Amato, 2000), children living in cohabiting families (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002), one or more children brought in to the marriage of one or both of the spouses (Stewart & Brentano, 2006, p.223) or children from a widowed single mother and a stepfather (Stewart & Brentano, 2006, p.223). Hence, this diversity may entail stepfamilies as complex as a clan of spouses, ex-spouses, children, stepchildren, siblings, and half siblings (Stewart & Brentano, 2006, p.223) given that most remarriages occur after a divorce rather than

¹About 45% of all first marriages in Ethiopia end in divorce or separation within 30 years, 40% within 20 years, 34% within 10 years and 28% within the first 5 years) (Tilson & Larsen, 2000, P.360)

the death of a spouse. In addition, stepsiblings, step-aunts, step-grandparents, and step-friends join the family circle requiring parents and children to adapt to these new relatives and relationships while, at the same time, maintaining their relationships with existing kin (Stewart and Brentano 2006).

The nature of stepfamilies have been extensively studied including its formation (e.g. Visher, Visher and Pasley 2003; Lamanna and Riedmanna 1994), impacts (e.g. Lamb and Lewis 2005), coping (Visher, Visher and Pasley 2003), processes (Ganong and Coleman 1994), and outcomes (Coleman, Ganong, and Fine 2000; Golish 2003; Strong et al. 1998; Stewart 2005). It is said that remarriage involves:

- “Outsiders” joining with “insiders” (Visher, Visher and Pasley, 2003) ultimately forming an “instant family” rather than a gradually evolving natural family (Papernow 1993);
- The same high expectations of a natural family, though instantaneously formed and lacks the history of growing up together (Papernow 1993);
- Members who have no shared family histories or shared ways of doing things, and may rather have very different beliefs (Fabricius 2003);
- Stepping into a family that may provide little space to new incumbents as most stepfamilies are created by divorce rather than death; thus making the stepparent an extra or “spare” parent (Lamanna and Riedmanna 1994) and increasing loyalty conflicts (Ganong and Coleman 1994);
- A reorganization of the stepparent households so as to respond to and resolve family conflicts (Fabricius 2003);
- Tremendous impacts like impeding alliances of parents and children in the formation of new family bonds (Visher, Visher and Pasley 2003), influencing several dynamics of the relationship and overall family functioning (Robertson et al. 2006);
- Multiple roles and relationships, a variety of household structures, and new family rules that everyone has to learn (Lamb and Lewis 2005);
- Struggle for achieving family solidarity (Coleman, Ganong, and Fine 2000; Golish 2003; Strong et al. 1998; Stewart 2005), and
- A dynamically evolving relationship (Cartwright 2003) in which there are frequent loyalty issues (Ganong and Coleman 1994)¹, structural and functional changes

¹Adults may find their loyalties divided between their children and their new spouse, and children struggle to balance their loyalties between their biological parents and their stepparents (Ganong and Coleman 1994).

(Stewart and Brentano 2006)²; and continued demand for adjustment to constant transitions (Visser, Visser and Pasley 2003).

Along these contexts of step-parenting, research investigations indicate that children in two biological parent families are better than children living with a stepparent (Kerr and Michalski 2004). Most research findings indicate that children in stepfamilies score lower on several psychosocial outcome measures (Brown 2006; Ganong and Coleman 2004; Hetherington 2005) compared to children from first-marriage families. More specifically, research findings have indicated that stepchildren are likely to:

- Have a troubled mother-child relationship (Golish 2003) and this troubled relationship is higher in families in which the resident father was not the biological father (Golish 2003; Hetherington 1993);
- Experience an increased risk of behavioral problems and adjustment difficulties compared with children in intact nuclear families (Wolchik et al. 2002);
- Demonstrate negative behavioral responses with the introduction of a stepparent into the family (Hetherington and Clingempeel 1992; Hetherington 1993);
- Develop externalizing³ and internalizing⁴ behavior problems (Emery et al. 1999; Hetherington 1992). Children of both genders typically experience risk for externalizing problems, such as alcohol use, delinquency, premature sexual intercourse, and teenage childbearing (Amato 1999) than do children in first married families (Hoffman and Johnson 1998). Children with biological parents are less likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behaviors compared to boys raised in stepparent households who were found to be three times as likely to be delinquent (Dornbusch et al. cited in Seleshi and Sentayehu 1998: 31);
- Report more conflict with their stepparents than what adolescents in intact families do with their parents (Amato 1999);

² Some members leave, others newly join; must cope with as children come and go between households (Visser, Visser, and Pasley 2003).

³ Externalizing problems include problem behaviors that are acted out or externally expressed like violence, substance abuse, etc.

⁴ Internalizing problems include inwardly held problems like depression, anxiety, stress... children from step families show more internalizing problems such as depressed mood (Zill et al. 1993), emotional problems such as depression (Fergusson et al. 1994)... As an immediate aftermath of parental remarriage, most children experience emotional distress including anger, resentment, non-compliance, anxiety and depression, stemming from changing relationships in the family and shifts in their life situation (Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan 1999).

- Adopt adult roles and tend to leave home to establish independent households at younger ages than children from intact families (Fergusson et al. 1994; Pryor and Rodgers 2001);
- Get lower grades in school, lower scores on achievement tests (Fergusson, et al., 1994), and drop out of school (Astone and McLanahan 1991; Bogenscheider 1997; Fergusson et al. 1994; Hetherington 2003b);
- Experience increased unemployment levels (Hetherington 2003b);
- Have children and form intimate relationships earlier than children in first-marriage families (Hetherington 2003b; Pryor and Rodgers 2001); and
- Experience a range of behaviors from reduced investment in education to neglect, abuse and even homicide by stepfathers (Daly and Wilson 1998; Emlen 1998; Anderson et al. 1999a, b).

These and numerous related other research investigations on stepfamilies have generally expounded the challenges that accompany step-parenting to the children, parents, and even relatives. As a tradition, research in the field has long been guided by a search for problems rather than a quest for strengths (Stewart and Brentano 2006), and life in a stepfamily has been viewed as inherently problematic for children (McLanahan 1999). However, there are evidences that cast shadows on these negative portrayals, possibly instigating a revisit to the statuesque. First, parents usually perceive their remarriage as a gain, something self-chosen, and a source of companionship and support for them (Ganong and Coleman 2004). Second, step-parenting also appears to avail substitute parenting to the children, too, which otherwise could make care and support a burden for a single parent particularly in societies where women are still tied up to homemaking and are not economically empowered, and fathers are still breadwinners and hardly manage the house and children without a wife. Third, some investigations still show that children in stepfamilies are not necessarily worse off than children in first marriages or with divorced, single parents. Fourth, in fact, evidences from research literature are mixed (Fergusson et al. 1994). The adjustment of children living in stepfamilies is not uniform; some children show resiliency across these transitions (Ganong and Coleman 2004). In the same way, some stepparents are more successful than others: some stepparent-stepchild relationships grow closer over time, others grow more distant, and yet others become more negative (Hetherington and Sttanley-Hagon 2002). Fifth, experiences also show that contrary to negative expectations and portrayal of step-parenting, some stepparents do really invest in children that are not their own biological offspring. There are even examples of caring behavior by stepparents (Davies et al. 2002). More specifically, it was noted that:

- Differences between stepchildren and children in intact families are small (McLanahan 1999), the effect sizes of statistically significant increased risk of negative outcomes of children in step families are small (Amato 2005; Coleman et al. 2000);
- Most children fare adequately well in stepfamilies (Ganong and Coleman, 2004; Hetherington 2005);
- Most stepchildren do well in school and do not suffer from emotional or behavioral problems (Amato 1999);
- There is a great deal of similarity than difference between children in stepfamilies and children in intact families (Amato 1999);
- Substantial number of stepchildren actually score higher on adjustment measures than the average child in an intact biological family (Brennan and Shaver 1998); and
- Even if stepchildren exhibit problems mainly during a transition period or immediately after their parent's remarriage, most show considerable resilience, and three-quarters have no long-term problems (Hetherington and Kelley 2002). Most of the adjustment difficulties occur within the first three years and if stepfamilies stay together, difficulties are usually resolved after five to seven years (Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham 2004; Ganong and Coleman 2004; Papernow 2008).

These divided views and contradictory findings would suggest a need for a further line of inquiry towards theorizing step-parenting and implications for children. Furthermore, the stepfamily dynamics being a socio-psychological construction, efforts at theorizing this dynamics needs to occur in context. This would suggest then that there is a need to explore step-parenting and its impact in a specific cultural context like Ethiopia. What it feels like growing up as a stepchild in Ethiopia needs to be examined. In Ethiopia, marriage is both an individual (partners) and social phenomenon; children's life is affected not only by the nuclear family but also by extended families, and therefore step-parenting would have its own distinct texture of functioning. This being the case, existing research in Ethiopia tends to treat stepchildren either along with orphaned children (because they are at least without one parent) or with children having both parents (because they are in the homestead). However, stepchildren are distinct and don't belong either to the OVC or to the full-parent group (because there is an added variable in their life: the impact of a stepparent); they rather share the characteristics of both. Hence, their developmental, social, psychological, physical, and legal situations need to be articulated. How child-friendly step-parenting is, if there is a critical need to address the situation of children and parents during remarriage and family reconstruction, etc., has to be examined to be

able to inform the academic, legal, and cultural discourse. Hence, this study bears the objective of examining the extent of provision of support by stepparents (compared to biological parents), how this provision impacts on children’s psychological wellbeing, if there are gender and age differences in these experiences, and possible implications of these experiences for interventions.

2. Methods

Study design: The study employs a quantitative and comparative research design in which experiences of children from stepfamilies (step father and step mother) are to be examined in comparison to children living with both biological parents to determine the impacts of step-parenting on the development of children.

Study sites: The study was conducted in the Shiromeda area of Addis Ababa. Above and beyond physical proximity and technical convenience (including familiarity with the research site and personnel facilitating data collection), it was assumed that there is a better chance of accessing children with stepparents as the area is one of the most impoverished sites in Addis Ababa. Findings suggest that lower income or poverty is the major factor for divorce (Stewart and Brenanto 2006) either directly (Albeck and Kaydar 2002) or indirectly by making couples vulnerable to divorce (Nelson 1995) and remarriage (Cartwright 2005; Einhorn1986). Hence, it is assumed that there are more number of stepfamilies and children in this area.

Participants: The research participants were school children sampled from three government schools: DilBetigel, Qusquam, and Addis Tesfa Primary and Secondary Schools. The population of these children and the corresponding sample are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Target population and sample size

Schools name	Population	Sample Size	Sex	
			Male	Female
DilBetigel	1728	169	78	91
Qusqam	968	94	30	64
Addis Tesfa	994	97	60	37
Total	3603	360	168	192

Three groups of children were drawn from each school: children living with stepfathers, stepmothers, and both parents. Table 2 presents the distribution of the sample by types of children.

Table 2. Children's parental background by grade level and gender

Grade level	Sex of the respondents	Children living with			Total
		Father and mother	Father and stepmother	Mother and stepfather	
4	Male	5	8	11	24
	Female	13	16	16	45
5	Male	14	23	24	61
	Female	11	9	10	30
6	Male	17	17	17	51
	Female	13	19	19	51
7	Male	12	13	7	32
	Female	24	23	19	66
Total	Male	48	61	59	168
	Female	61	67	64	192
	Total	109	128	123	360

The procedure of sampling followed a bottom-up approach in which the researchers walked from classroom to classroom of grades 4 to 7 and administered a background search questionnaire to identify children with stepparents and the kinds of step-parenting they find themselves with. Following this procedure, the sampling frame was identified for children with stepparents. Then, it was decided to sample comparable number of cases from each of the three groups in every classroom containing children with the three parental backgrounds. Classrooms lacking in children from stepfamilies were skipped. Random sampling technique was then applied to draw the actual child to be included in the sample. The method allows giving equal chance of selection for all elements of the population in each study area (Justus and Butte 2001: 29-31).

Instrument: Structured questionnaire was used to generate data from children. This questionnaire, adopted from Daniel's (1994) and Sisay's (1997) measures, focuses on four themes: Academic support, school material support, parent-child attachment, social relationship and self-esteem. A five-point Likert-type scale was applied for self-rating on the last four themes while simple description of personal data was required from children in the first theme.

Pre-testing of the questionnaire was made using a sample of 30 school children. Clarity

of expressions, format of presentation of items, and the reliability of the total and subscales were examined in the process. Accordingly, modifications were made based on feedbacks on items having these problems and the reliability indices of the subscales were found to range from .72 to .89 (see table 3). These indices indicate an acceptable level of instrument reliability. In fact, the content validity of the questionnaire was checked by two colleagues, and items that were marked “irrelevant” and “not sure” were removed from the list before the questionnaire was pilot-tested.

Table 3. Summary of reliability of each variable (Likert scale)

Variables	Number of items	Chrobach Alpha value
Academic support	9	0.75
School material support	11	0.67
Attachment	15	0.89
Self-esteem	15	0.82
Social relationship	13	0.72

Ethical Considerations: The researchers introduced the purpose of the study and secured consent from the school principals. Oral consent was also secured from both parents and children. Children were told about the purpose of the research a day before the administration of the questionnaire and then asked to inform the same to their parents and then invited to appear with the comments from parents. As per the arrangement, almost all turned up with endorsement of our proposal both by themselves and their parents and, therefore, filled out the questionnaire following the instruction given by the researchers.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings of the study under four subheadings. The background characteristics of the sample are summarized in the first part using descriptive statistics. The second part presents descriptive statistics on the study variables by parental status. The third part presents inferential statistical test that attempts to determine differences of the three groups of children on the variables. One-way ANOVA was specifically employed to examine these differences. When the ANOVA tests yield significant values, then multiple comparisons are made to find out the sources of these differences using the least significant difference (Fisher’s LSD) technique. Finally, attempts are made to determine if the impact of parental background on the study variables would differ gender and age-wise.

3.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

As indicated earlier, equal number of cases was sampled from each school (i.e. 120 children) and parental status group (i.e. 120). The age of children ranged from 11 to 15 years with a mean of 13.36 years. The grade levels attended were from Grades 4 to 7; the median being Grade 6. The mean duration of stay with the current stepparent was 8.16 years. As it can be seen in table 4, age of respondents, grade level, and sex are comparable across the three groups of children. Years lived with stepparents is also comparable for children from step- mother and stepfather group.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics on background variables by parental status

With whom do you live?		Age of the respondents	Grade level of the respondents	Years lived with stepparent	Sex
With mother and father	Mean	13.38	5.31		.5000
	N	120	120		120
	Std. Deviation	1.223	1.106		.50210
With father and stepmother	Mean	13.38	5.63	5.80	.4583
	N	120	120	120	120
	Std. Deviation	1.323	1.153	2.978	.50035
With mother and stepfather	Mean	13.33	5.85	5.32	.4417
	N	120	120	120	120
	Std. Deviation	1.182	1.010	2.694	.49867
Total	Mean	13.36	5.59	8.16	.4667
	N	360	360	360	360
	Std. Deviation	1.241	1.111	4.416	.49958

3.2. Descriptive Statistics on the Study Variables

The variables of interest in the analysis are perceived parental support (academic and material), positive parent-child relationships and children's psychosocial wellbeing (as indicated by social competence and self-esteem). Table 5 presents the descriptive statistical summary. This table shows that children with both biological parents earn the highest scores in all the measures except for social competence, followed by children with stepmothers. While all the scores for children living with both biological parents

are well above the expected mean, the reverse is true for the other two groups (except for social competence). It can still be noted that academic and material support are relatively lesser among all the groups. Social competence appears comparable across the three groups. The next analysis tries to determine the significance of differences in the mean values among the three groups in all the five measures.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics on study variables

Living with:		Academic support	Material support	Parent-child interaction	Self-esteem	Social competence
Mother and father	Mean	52.8083	41.4492	68.8333	61.8917	40.6500
	N	120	118	120	120	120
	Std. Deviation	3.60508	2.96878	4.37590	3.93603	5.49507
Father and stepmother	Mean	20.3193	30.1780	30.4370	35.7395	42.4790
	N	119	118	119	119	119
	Std. Deviation	3.83103	3.20425	4.94656	4.32858	4.22633
Mother and stepfather	Mean	15.8487	27.5667	24.5417	31.1500	41.0583
	N	119	120	120	120	120
	Std. Deviation	4.38727	3.13219	5.46939	4.65562	4.65498
Total	Mean	29.7235	33.0337	41.3008	42.9471	41.3928
	N	358	356	359	359	359
	Std. Deviation	16.98010	6.77726	20.29390	14.23898	4.87257
Expected mean		27.0	33.0	45.0	45.0	39.0

3.3. Differences among the Three Groups of Children

One way analysis of variance summarized in table 6 shows that there are significant differences among the three groups in academic support ($F_{2, 352}=3093.93$, Sig=.000), material support ($F_{2, 352}=667.743$, Sig=.000), parent-child interaction ($F_{2, 352}=2795.746$, Sig=.000), self-esteem ($F_{2, 352}=1743.171$, Sig=.000), and social competence ($F_{2, 352}=4.975$, Sig=.007).

The question here is which of the three groups are responsible for this difference? The next post hoc analysis (table 7) attempts to specifically locate the source of the significant F-ratios above.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA-study variables by the three groups of children

Source of variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic support	Between Groups	95848.02	2	47924.01	3093.93	.000
	Within Groups	5452.38	352	15.49		
	Total	101300.39	354			
Material support	Between Groups	12891.43	2	6445.71	667.743	.000
	Within Groups	3397.85	352	9.65		
	Total	16289.28	354			
Positive parent child interaction	Between Groups	136150.14	2	68075.07	2795.75	.000
	Within Groups	8571.03	352	24.35		
	Total	144721.17	354			
Self-esteem	Between Groups	64600.71	2	32300.35	1743.17	.000
	Within Groups	6522.44	352	18.530		
	Total	71123.14	354			
Social competence	Between Groups	233.09	2	116.54	4.98	.007
	Within Groups	8245.83	352	23.43		
	Total	8478.92	354			
Total	Between Groups	1076138.48	2	538069.24	1653.40	.000
	Within Groups	114551.88	352	325.43		
	Total	1190690.36	354			

3.4. Comparisons of the Three Groups of Children

Comparison of means shows that all of them are different from one another except in a few cases where children from both biological parents failed to significantly differ from children with stepfathers (table 7).

Table 7. Multiple comparisons of means through LSD technique

Dependent Variable	(I) Living with	(J) Living with	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Academic support	Mother and father	Father and stepmother	32.37288*	.51238	.00
		Mother and stepfather	36.92245*	.51131	.00
	Father and stepmother	Mother and stepfather	4.54957*	.51131	.00
Material support	Mother and father	Father and stepmother	11.27119*	.40449	.00
		Mother and stepfather	13.89453*	.40364	.00
	Father and stepmother	Mother and stepfather	2.62334*	.40364	.00
Parent-child interaction	Mother and father	Father and stepmother	38.24576*	.64242	.00
		Mother and stepfather	44.22504*	.64107	.00
	Father and stepmother	Mother and stepfather	5.97928*	.64107	.00
Self-esteem	Mother and father	Father and stepmother	26.00847*	.56041	.00
		Mother and stepfather	30.67077*	.55923	.00
	Father and stepmother	Mother and stepfather	4.66230*	.55923	.00

Table 7. *Cont'd.*

Dependent Variable	(I) Living with	(J) Living with	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
		Father and stepfather	-.44039	.62879	.48
	Father and stepmother	Mother and stepfather	1.45791*	.62879	.02
Dependent Variable	(I) Living with	(J) Living with	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.

Dependent Variable	(I) Living with	(J) Living with	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
		Father and stepfather	-.44039	.62879	.48
Total	Mother and father	Father and stepmother	106.00000*	2.3486	.00
		Mother and stepfather	125.27240*	2.3436	.00
	Father and stepmother	Mother and stepfather	19.27240*	2.3436	.00

3.5. Parental Status by Gender and Age

Step-parenting is diverse in its nature. This diversity unfolds itself in terms of age and sex, among many other factors. It was felt necessary to check if children's age and sex would differently relate to parenting variables for the three groups of children. Table 8 presents the results of Multivariate analysis for independent measures (sex by parental status) by the dependent variables (the five study variables). As it can be seen in this table, the main effects are significant only for parental status, not for sex. The interaction effect was also not significant.

Table 8. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects-study variables by parental status and by sex

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Academic support	95877.328 ^a	5	19175.466	1234.032	.000
	Material support	12901.150 ^b	5	2580.230	265.781	.000
	Parent-child interaction	136192.052 ^c	5	27238.410	1114.560	.000
	Self-esteem	64617.220 ^d	5	12923.444	693.258	.000
	Social compt.	316.865 ^e	5	63.373	2.710	.020

Table 8. *Cont'd.*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	Academic support	310528.144	1	310528.14	19983.96	.000
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Material support	385545.313	1	385545.31	39713.75	.000
	Parent-child interaction	601134.745	1	601134.75	24597.63	.000
	Self-esteem	649943.753	1	649943.75	34865.21	.000
	Social competence	604237.553	1	604237.55	25836.50	.000
Parental status	Academic support	95376.210	2	47688.105	3068.955	.000
	Material support	12783.546	2	6391.773	658.395	.000
	Parent-child interaction	135480.360	2	67740.180	2771.838	.000
	Self-esteem	64213.854	2	32106.927	1722.325	.000
	Social competence	219.942	2	109.971	4.702	.010
Sex	Academic support	9.979	1	9.979	.642	.423
	Material support	2.713	1	2.713	.280	.597
	Parent-child interaction	16.336	1	16.336	.668	.414
	Self-esteem	14.736	1	14.736	.790	.375
	Social competence	5.901	1	5.901	.252	.616
Parental status* Sex	Academic support	19.313	2	9.656	.621	.538
	Material support	7.025	2	3.512	.362	.697
	Parent-child interaction	25.519	2	12.759	.522	.594

Table 8. *Cont'd.*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Self-esteem	1.755	2	.878	.047	.954
	Social competence	77.971	2	38.985	1.667	.190

Table 9 presents a summary of the multivariate analysis of the independent variables (parental status by age) and dependent variables (the five study variables). The analysis yields that the two main effects and the interaction effects are all significant. Table 10 presents the mean score of participants on study variables by parental status to show the specifics of these differences.

Table 9. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects-study variables by parental status and by age

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Academic support	95993.422 ^a	5	19198.684	1262.554	.000
	Material support	13050.912 ^b	5	2610.182	281.300	.000
	Parent-child interaction	136452.475 ^c	5	27290.495	1151.861	.000
	Self-esteem	64880.208 ^d	5	12976.042	725.402	.000
	Social competence	546.391 ^e	5	109.278	4.808	.000
Intercept	Academic support	311380.715	1	311380.72	20477.20	.000
	Material support	386477.173	1	386477.17	41650.79	.000
	Parent-child interaction	602937.357	1	602937.36	25448.42	.000
	Self-esteem	651935.395	1	651935.40	36445.27	.000
	Social competence	605766.516	1	605766.52	26651.35	.000

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Parental status	Academic support	95171.919	2	47585.960	3129.374	.000
	Material support	12740.501	2	6370.251	686.524	.000
	Parent-child interaction	135110.120	2	67555.060	2851.324	.000
	Self-esteem	64001.012	2	32000.506	1788.930	.000

Table 9. *Cont'd.*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Parental status	Social competence	275.982	2	137.991	6.071	.003
Age	Academic support	131.326	1	131.326	8.636	.004
	Material support	99.865	1	99.865	10.762	.001
	Parent-child interaction	260.035	1	260.035	10.975	.001
	Self-esteem	179.145	1	179.145	10.015	.002
	Social competence	131.686	1	131.686	5.794	.017
Parental status* Age	Academic support	14.717	2	7.359	.484	.617
	Material support	60.758	2	30.379	3.274	.039
	Parent-child interaction	43.856	2	21.928	.926	.397
	Self-esteem	102.108	2	51.054	2.854	.059
	Social competence	183.436	2	91.718	4.035	.019

As it can be seen in table 10, children with ages 11 to 13 years appear to consistently secure higher perceived score compared with those with ages 14 to 15 years.

Table 10. Mean scores on the study variables for the three groups by age

Age in years	Parental status, i.e., children living with:	Parent-child interaction	Self-esteem	Social competence	Academic support	Material support
11 to 13 years (N=192)	Mother and father	69.48	61.97	40.35	53.25	41.77
	Father and stepmother	32.04	37.42	44.19	21.40	31.42
	Mother and stepfather	25.1	31.75	41.64	16.33	27.73
	Total	43.21	44.37	41.97	31.17	33.92
14 to 15 years	Mother	68.18	61.82	40.95	52.37	41.12
	and father	29.19	34.43	41.15	19.48	29.20
	Mother and stepfather	24.06	30.65	40.57	15.44	27.43
	Total	39.64	41.71	40.89	28.46	32.25

4. DISCUSSION

Exploring experiences of stepchildren in stepfamilies is crucial to provide the required care and support as well as proper intervention to the children and their families. Accordingly, this study attempted to examine experiences of stepchildren by way of comparison with children living with biological parents. In a way, it examined how step-parenting compares with biological parenting in terms of parental (academic and material) support; extent of positive parent-child relationship, and children's psychological wellbeing (self-esteem and social competence).

The findings suggest that in all the five measures children living with biological parents exhibited a significantly better profile. A large body of literature supports these findings. Some of these findings are already summarized and presented in the introductory section of this paper. These findings suggest that children with stepparents stand in a lesser profile compared to children from intact families beginning from entry into the stepfamily, through the continued experience of child-parent interaction, and care and support. Outcome studies also suggest that these children are at an increased risk of negative outcomes compared to children in first marriage families (Hoffmann and Johnson 1998; Lee et al. 1994).

A number of explanations can be given for the adverse effects of growing up in a stepfamily. The most common explanations involve evolutionary-biological theories, psychological (individual) theories, and social theories.

The most comprehensive explanation comes from the ecological perspective. This perspective underscores the role of environmental influences on individual behaviors. It stresses that a range of factors impact on development and these factors are nested within four ecological levels: the background and characteristics of the individual (ontogenetic level), family relations (micro- system level), family interactions with elements outside the family (community or mesosystem and exosystem level), and socio-cultural variables at the macro- system level. In practice, this framework allows for the consideration of such variables as stress management skills, which is an individual characteristic; the co-parenting relationship and the stepparent - stepchild relationship, which are microsystems and ecosystems; the lack of support from in-laws, which is an element of the exosystem; and community bias in favor of first families, which is an element of the macro system. We will briefly discuss next our findings along with this approach. Specific theories that explain development from each of the components of this ecological perspective are used for our purpose.

We may begin with evolutionary theory, which holds that genetic benefits arise from fathering and investing in one's own natural children rather than in stepchildren. According to this theory, compared to the biological parent a stepparent invests little time and resources on their stepchildren. The stepparent is more disengaged, less emotionally available, less affectionate, and provides less supervision than the biological parent (Ganong and Coleman 2004; Amato 1996; 1999; Hetherington 1992). Because the stepparent is significantly disengaged from the child, s/he is unlikely to respond to the child in times of distress. Moreover, the child may be less likely to expect the stepparent to be responsive in the first place and, thus, not even attempt to form any kind of attachment.

A related explanation comes from attachment theory. The theory holds that either because of the reluctance of stepparent to invest on a non-biological child (Ganong and Coleman 2004; Amato 1999; Hetherington 1992) or the child's feeling of anger, resentment, confusion and insecurity following divorce and remarriage (Cartwright 2010), the child's ability to form meaningful relationships is altered (Cartwright 2010). That is, the scar left on children by the first experience acts as a barrier to forming attachment with a stepparent after remarriage (Cassidy and Shaver 1999).

The most common psychological explanations center on the stresses related to remarriage and stepfamily life. When parents remarry, parent-child relationships come under

considerable stress especially in the early stages and during adolescence (Cartwright 2008; Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan 1999) mainly because:

- Many changes are involved, such as moving to a new residence with further loss, including losing friends and local support (Coleman et al. 2000), adapting to new household members, and learning new household routines and activities (Amato 1991) ;
- Conflict of interest among parents, for example, being caught between the needs of their children and their new partner (Cartwright 2003);
- Parents may fail to communicate effectively about upcoming changes with children and fail to take in to consideration children's developmental stage and individual needs (Cartwright 2003)'
- Parents invest time and energy in their new spouse, and stepparents may need to attend to their children from prior marriages thus reducing parental warmth, attention, and monitoring (Long et al. 1987);
- Stepfamily members often have unrealistic expectations about their new family based on first-marriage family values and experiences (Coleman et al. 2000; Whiteside 2006; Visser, Visser and Pasley 2003) and trying to attain these expectations may lead to stress disappointment and hurt if they are not met;
- Conflicts between divorced parents and among members before the formation of the stepfamily may contribute to adverse outcomes for stepchildren (Heinicke et al. 1997). By the time children enter a stepfamily, they already have more adjustment problems, and these contribute to further problems (Amato and Booth 2001).

In stepfamilies, the parent-child bond was already formed with biological parents and this makes it more difficult for the "outsider" stepparent to be included; hence, they can feel jealous and isolated (Howden 2007; Papernow 2006)

The socio-cultural view rather gives a macro-level explanation that governs behavior at individual household level. It argues that stepfamilies have been the most maligned groups throughout history and across cultures; thus biological parents benefit from a positive bias regarding parenting their children (Stewart Brentano 2006). Stepparents are more likely to be perceived negatively to the extent that when some parents fail to be affectionate or show some signs of stringent rules, people tend to comment, "Is s/he a stepparent to do so?" Stories are abundant in the Ethiopian cultures narrating in fairy tales of "wicked stepmothers" and "cruel stepfathers." Children's songs (like the popular

“*Abebayehush*”⁵ song in Amharic), proverbs (like “*Ye sew inkulale yankewalelal*”⁶), and common names (as in the Amharic name “*ye injera innat*” or stepmother used to name an infant’s dummy⁷ contain wrong stereotypes about step-parenting and stepchildren.

The view that stepfamilies are deviant and potentially harmful for children is not only common in popular tales; negative stereotypes of stepparents also influence the attitudes and behaviors of helping professionals (Stewart & Brentano, 2006). *Cognitive behavioral theory* maintains that (a) beliefs about how relationships should function and (b) expectations about relational dynamics affect one’s behavior in a relationship (Crohn 2010). To the extent that the beliefs and expectations positively affect relationships, the beliefs/expectations are considered functional; To the extent they negatively affect relationships; the beliefs/expectations are considered dysfunctional (Cummings et al. 2006). Beliefs can also be realistic or unrealistic based on generally supported “truths” about stepfamily living. Accordingly, the negative socio-cultural beliefs that prevail in many cultures in Ethiopia today would serve as a script that depresses experiences, functions, and outcomes of stepfamilies.

Role ambiguity theory explains the problem of the socio-cultural view from a different but still meaningful perspective:

- Parental competencies may be compromised when forming a stepfamily and negotiating boundaries and roles (Lee et al. 1994);
- Stepfamily members often have differing perceptions of the stepparent role (Coleman and Ganong 1997);
- Lack of discussion by stepfamily couples of the stepparent role and approach to parenting prior to remarriage (Marsiglio 2004; Whiteside 2006);
- Wrong way of role definition as in adults in a stepfamily defining their roles on those of first marriage norms rather than adapting to the specifics of the stepfamily situation (Fine et al. 1999);
- Lack of norms about roles and rules (i.e., patterns of functioning). There is no social prescription for stepfamily roles and rules - a phenomenon that came to be known as the “unfinished institution” of stepfamilies (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1994));

⁵ ‘*Abebayehush*’ is a popular Amharic song of children. Part of this song talks about stepmother’s indignation when a stepchild comes home late.

⁶ “*Ye sew inkulale yankewalelal*” is an Amharic proverb, which means a child who is not one’s own makes one’s composure awkward.

⁷ An infant’s dummy is named in Amharic “stepmother” to imply that like a stepmother who does not properly feed the child, the dummy is in the mouth of the child yet without any nourishment to the child.

- Within the stepfamily, members do not necessarily agree about what role a stepparent should play (Amato and DeBoer 2001).

In as much as there is lack of social role prescription for step-parenting, stepparents do not have a legal parental relationship with stepchildren, which is likely to impact a stepparent's perception of his or her relationship with a stepchild. The legal perspective holds that the lack of a social script for the stepparent role is compounded by an absence of legal protection (Amato and Booth 2001) and provisions. For example, stepparents have no legal obligation regarding their stepchildren during remarriage and legal rights after the remarriage end through divorce or death (Amato and Booth 2001). This lack of a social and legal standing may lead stepparents to avoid close attachments and unreserved material investments in their stepchildren. Many stepparents feel that they have all the burdens of parenting without any rights. This feeling is likely to be aggravated if the children continue to maintain contact with their biological, nonresidential parents (Stewart and Brentano 2006). Stepparents may take on parenting tasks such as feeding, fetching, and supervising homework, but their full participation may be thwarted (Bramlett and Mosher 2002). And, yet there is no legal accountability for negligence of care and support for children who live under the roof of the stepfamily.

Sociological theory can still shade light on the why of the adverse effects of step-parenting. This perspective argues that the crux of the issue in step-parenting is not the differential treatment of children; rather, stepfathers differ in a variety of unmeasured ways from biological fathers, and it is these factors rather than step parenthood that matters to how men invest in children and how children's lives are affected (Ginther and Pollak 2000). For example, their family income may be lower, they may be less attractive partners, and they may be unable to find a childless woman willing to marry them. As a result, they may be willing to marry someone who already has children (Anderson et al. 1999a) as in the Amharic proverb that says '*Ye chenekew erguz yagebal*' ("a pressed person marries a pregnant woman"). Controlling for these unmeasured differentials should reduce the observed differences among the groups. This "negative selectivity" also leads to the expectation of a lower overall level of investment in children in blended families because of the shortcomings of the stepparent. Recent research has found evidence both for a high degree of selectivity and for a more modest degree. Ginther and Pollak (2000) find that differential treatment by stepparents disappears when siblings within the same family are examined. However, using a large sample of teenagers, Evenhouse and Reilly (2000) find only a small reduction in the effects of step-parenting within families compared to between families. Braithwaite and colleagues (2008) found that although differences in outcomes are smaller for step- and biological children within families than for comparisons across families, stepchildren in blended families nonetheless complete less education than biological children from the same households. These varying results may be due to differences in the ages of children or due to different samples.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussions conducted so far, it can be concluded that:

- stepparents are significantly less supportive (academically, materially, emotionally) than biological parents;
- Level of parental support is found to be significantly correlated with psychological wellbeing of children;
- Step children are significantly lower than biological children in psychological wellbeing;
- Gender and age differences are not significant both in support received and in psychological functioning.

In the light of these findings, we may now need to draw some implications for intervention to improve the situation of step-parenting and stepchildren in our study area. These implications are pinpointed in terms of psycho-educational, socio-cultural, and, more importantly, legal and policy issues as well as delineation of future lines of enquiry.

Psycho-educational programming: There needs to be a legal framework requiring that adults intending to reconstruct step families be exposed at the outset to a psycho-educational program that would help them rework their attitudes, beliefs and expectations about step-parenting and stepchildren and build important step-parenting skills. This programming is a proactive measure to deal with troubled family dynamics by empowering stepparents to engage lightly but consistently in connecting with their stepchildren; to avoid withdrawal when experiencing rejection from stepchildren (Amato 2000), learn to avoid rushing in as a disciplinarian, expecting instant love, trying to replace the biological parent, or acting as the biological parent's equal (Wang and Amato 2000), and build realistic expectations and offer positive and persistent involvement with the stepchildren so that an affectionate relationship will gradually develop with stepchildren.

Advocacy and media work: the socio-cultural scripts of step-parenting and children may portray negative images of roles and expectations and therefore advocacy and media work are useful for fundamentally changing this perception. Furthermore, these activities will also help a lot in improving the visibility of these groups of children.

Legal and policy recommendations: We also recommend the need for visibility of these children from the legal perspective as follows:

- The decision to reconstruct a stepfamily needs to be participatory (give space to the voice of the children) and in the best interest of the children (rather than the partners). Moreover, after stepfamilies are reconstructed, the family dynamics needs to be monitored to see to it that the parenting practice is non-discriminatory, non-abusive, and to ensure the survival and development of the children including meeting their material, psychological, and educational needs.
- In as much as stepfamilies are legally formed, there needs to be in this legal contract clearly articulated statements about ensuring and respecting children's rights. To this end, the duties and responsibilities of the stepparents need to be specified in caring for and supporting the stepchildren. That is, the stepparent has to agree to respect the best interest of the stepchild, ensure the survival and development of the stepchild, avoid discrimination against the stepchild, and agree to allow the stepchild to participate in all matters concerning him/ her.
- If stepparents assume legal obligations to stepchildren, then they also need to have certain legal rights as a parent particularly after divorce and remarriage as this could be one factor for stepparents to be indifferent in caring and supporting the stepchildren.
- The Revised Family Code (RFC) of Ethiopia (RFC 2000) needs to give space to the legal rights and obligations of the stepfamily members, and operationally, the monitoring mechanism of these families.

Further line of enquiry: This study has not controlled, among others, the influence of pre-remarriage negative experiences of children on post-remarriage developmental encounters. Evidences indicate that one explanation for the problems children in stepfamilies exhibit is the adverse experiences they encountered even before the remarriage, during the divorce and life in a single-parent family (Amato 2005). By the time they enter a stepfamily, they already have more adjustment problems, and these contribute to further problems (Amato 2005). Hence, further research is needed to check if status of stepchildren's psychological wellbeing could be accounted for by pre-remarital experiences and show the net effect of experiences that accompany life during remarriage.

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Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty and Child Wellbeing in Ethiopia: Early Childhood Health, Nutrition and Cognitive Development

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Abstract

The primary objective of this paper is to trace the initial childhood poverty (wellbeing) trajectories in Ethiopia in the light of Intergenerational Transmission of poverty (IGT). Childhood poverty, as part of the overall intergenerational poverty or wellbeing, is assessed using the first lifecycle covering the preschool period which covers children's age from conception to their fifth birthday and the second lifecycle which covers children's years of primary school.

In the first cycle children's health and nutritional status is considered as a summary outcome variable to capture their wellbeing for the period. In order to identify the major factors which affect preschool child health and nutritional status in Ethiopia, we have employed 2SLS Instrumental Variable regression using panel data obtained from the first two rounds of the Young Lives survey in 2002 and 2006. Our result shows that the summary outcome variable for preschool child health and nutritional status – Height for Age Z score (HAZ) is found to be significantly associated with educational level of the household head, household quality index, consumer durables index, access to toilet facilities and electricity in the surrounding community, the number of male and female children aged 1-5 years other than the index child, sex of the child, mother's education and father's education.

In the second lifecycle stage children's wellbeing is captured by their cognitive development measured using PPVT RAW score. In order to obtain the major factors associated with children's educational attainment and thus their cognitive development, we have employed IV estimation strategy. The Young Lives data for the same younger cohort children administered in the last round in 2010 is used for the analysis in this part. Accordingly, we find that variations in the children's cognitive ability in the beginning of the second lifecycle stage is attributed to children's time allocation, paternal and care giver's educational status, household wealth, household composition and birth order.

Finally, the link variable between the two life cycle stages (One period Lagged value of HAZ) is found to be weakly significant to determine subsequent educational attainment and thus children's cognitive development. Based on these results we suggest some policy implications such as adult education schemes for parents; infant nutritious food supply programs and school feeding programs; enacting a more modest child labor law and strengthening its enforcement; and infrastructural development, especially power supply and sanitation facilities.

Key Words: Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty (IGT), Life Cycle Framework, HAZ, PPVT RAW Score, Childhood Poverty, Cognitive Development, Positive Deviance

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of intergenerational transmission (IGT) of poverty from parents to a child shows the likelihood that a child born to poor or non-poor parents becomes a poor or non-poor adult. Two broad stages in the lifecycle can capture the complete IGT process (a complete poverty cycle). The first stage captures the likelihood that a child born into a poor family will be a poor child which depends partly on the extent to which poor or a non-poor parents transfer poverty-related capital to their children and partly on the extent to which the child is vulnerable, resistant or resilient to poverty. The second stage, on the other hand, captures the likelihood that a poor (or non-poor) child will become a poor (or non-poor) adult (starting the cycle anew), which depends on individual (resilience) and structural factors (such as availability of safety net). It is intuitively clear that these stages are highly interrelated to each other (Moore 2001).

Empirical investigations so far indicated that being a poor child increases the chances of being a poor adult but this is not always the case, and other factors can operate independently to affect wellbeing over the life-course. In other words, poverty is not simply transferred as a ‘package’ from one generation to the next. Instead, a complex set of factors contribute to the likelihood of a person being poor at some point in their life, and influence the likelihood that they will become chronically poor, or experience ‘irreversibility’. Although highly context specific, household characteristics and initial endowments have been found to be important factors determining an individual’s asset bundle, their capabilities and characteristics, and their power to exercise agency. Individuals’ assets, capabilities and agency come together to shape life, family histories. The interaction between these factors, alongside the key moments and decision-making points in a life course, affect the likelihood that an individual moves into poverty in the future, lives in poverty for the rest of his/her life or escapes poverty (Bird 2007; Aubery 2012; Krause 2013).

Particularly, well-established empirical evidence on the decisive role of early child health, nutrition and education on its wellbeing coupled with the fact that children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse make childhood a critical stage of development in the lifecycle¹. Thus, in such respect, the concept of childhood poverty focuses on the major deprivations which children face in childhood, especially in terms of health, nutrition, and education. As a result, since the negative effects of deprivation on human development tend to cumulate, individuals with greater exposure to poverty during childhood are likely to have more difficulty escaping poverty as adults (Victora

¹ This is mainly because they are still growing physically, are naturally dependent on adults, and are often powerless for their wellbeing and security.

et al. 2008; Behrman et al. 2009; Maluccio et al. 2009). Therefore, in the face of the life cycle framework, childhood Poverty and the mechanisms that lead to a transmission of poverty over a life course and between generations assume special significance in low income countries where a large number of families continue to live in chronic poverty situations.

Proper nutrition, for instance, contributes significantly to declines in under-five mortality rates and therefore, improving nutritional status is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Globally, an estimated 165 million children under-five years of age, or 26%, were stunted (i.e., height-for-age below -2 SD) in 2011 — a 35% decrease from an estimated 253 million in 1990. High prevalence levels of stunting among children under-five years of age in Africa (36% in 2011) and Asia (27% in 2011) remain a public health problem, one which often goes unrecognized. More than 90% of the world's stunted children live in Africa and Asia (UNICEF-WHO-World Bank 2012).

In addition, the 2011 EDHS estimated the national prevalence of stunting among children at 44.4 percent, the prevalence of underweight at 28.7 percent and wasting at 9.7 percent. The survey also revealed that the level of chronic malnutrition among women in Ethiopia is relatively high, with 27 percent of women either thin or undernourished—that is, having a body mass index (BMI) of less than 18.5 kg/m^2 . Similarly, the prevalence of anemia among women in the reproductive age group (15–49) was found to be 17 percent (CSA 2012).

Between 2000 and 2011 the prevalence of both underweight and stunting declined by 28.7 and 44.4 percent, respectively. While this trend is clearly progressing in the right direction, Ethiopia needs to accelerate efforts to reach the Health Sector Development Plan's (HSDP IV) target of reducing the prevalence of stunting to 30 percent by 2015.

Moreover, micronutrient deficiencies contribute significantly to morbidity and mortality among children. Micronutrient deficiencies, particularly iron, iodine and Vitamin A deficiencies, are significant public health problems in Ethiopia. The national prevalence of anemia among children under 5 years of age has dropped by 19 percent between 2005 and 2011—from 54 percent in 2005 to 44 percent in 2011. Iodine is vital for healthy growth and mental development. According to the World Health Organization, salt iodization needs to reach 90 percent if Ethiopia is to be on track to eliminate iodine deficiency (WHO 1993). The Ministry of Health and relevant NNP implementing sectors have taken important strides to ensure progress towards universal salt iodization, including calling for mandatory use and sale of iodized salt.

In addition to its effect on the eyes, Vitamin A deficiency increases the severity of

childhood infections. Nationwide supplementation of Vitamin A is undertaken twice a year, covering 91.7 percent of children under 5 (MoH 12). Levels of nutritional indices (stunting, wasting and underweight) and micronutrient deficiencies are high but showing improving trends. However, the feeding practices of Ethiopian families remain sub-optimal. According to EDHS 2011, only half of children under 2 living with their mothers are exclusively breastfed. Only 4.3 percent of children consumed the recommended four food groups and just 13 percent of children under 2 consumed iron-rich foods.

From policy perspectives, cognizant of the indispensable role played by early childhood health, nutrition and education on human capital development, the Ethiopian government has begun to adopt strategies targeted towards improving child wellbeing. The Government of Ethiopia has demonstrated its policy commitment to nutrition by developing a standalone National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) and a National Nutrition Program (NNP), along with a set of guidelines. The government has also incorporated nutrition, in particular stunting, into its 5-year Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP). Sectoral strategies and programs also provide a good opportunity to mainstream nutrition into other NNP implementing sectors and to enact legislation or establish legal frameworks to enforce key nutrition interventions.

For instance, in 2008, the Ethiopian government launched a comprehensive strategy by combining the National Nutrition Program (NNP) and other nutrition services together into one. A strong safety net program supported by an emergency response system, improved infant feeding practices, micronutrient supplementation and treatment of SAM, and a package of free health services implemented along with the NNP brought the country to the stage as one of the success stories in the world in reducing under-five mortality and stunting over the past decade. Like the case in early childhood health and nutrition, the Ethiopian government also started to give attention to early childhood education recently. The government's announcement of a National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education in 2010 can be a manifestation of such attention.

Such efforts of the government were not fruitless. Accordingly, UNICEF report (2013), using DHS, shows that under-five mortality fell from an estimated 139 deaths per 1,000 live births to 77 per 1,000, between 2000 and 2011 in Ethiopia, which is close to the MDG 4 target of 66 per 1,000. Moreover, stunting among children under 5 also decreased during this period, from an estimated 57% to 44%. Moreover, primary school and children's early childhood academic achievement has relatively better statistical figures than health and nutrition in Ethiopia in recent years. As per the Ministry of Education report (MoE 2012), the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in primary education increased from 22.5% in 1992 to 85.3% in 2010/11.

However, Ethiopia ranked 7th among 14 countries hosting 80% of the world's most stunted children. There are still more than 5 million children in the country (44%) who were stunted in 2011, which is tantamount to saying that 3% of the world's stunted children live in the country. More surprisingly, the economy's leap in GNP per capita growth in the last decade from US\$130 in 2000 to US\$400 in 2011 seems to be insufficient on its own to reduce under-nutrition in the country (UNICEF 2013). On the other hand, although there have been significant recent successes in improving access to basic education, there remain significant challenges in ensuring that education is of adequate quality. Lower performance in primary school as explained by higher dropout rates (19.1% for boys and 17.6% for girls, in 2008/09) and thus lower gross intake in the last grade of primary school (52 % in 2008/9) can partly explain some aspects of these challenges (MoE 2012).

Collectively speaking, despite the recent efforts by authorities and corresponding success stories, early childhood health and nutritional status, and schooling attainment in Ethiopia are at their very critical stage which could trigger potential damages to the country's human capital development². According to the child development report in 2012 Ethiopia ranked 138th between 2000 and 2004, and ranked 136th between 2005 and 2010, having child development index (CDI) score of 49.35 and 32.53, respectively.

As a result, in the quest to fill the knowledge gap between the process of IGT poverty in Ethiopia and the prevalence of the problem itself, as manifested by the facts explained above, the motivation of this paper is driven by the necessity of investigating the nature and reversibility of child wellbeing in the process of intergenerational transmission of poverty during childhood in Ethiopia. Therefore, using the lifecycle framework the paper will identify the range of individual child, household and community level factors that increase the likelihood that poverty is passed from parents to their children during preschool and schooling years of childhood in the country.

The paper is expected to contribute to the existing literature in several ways. First, the paper uses the lifecycle framework to solve various problems in making empirical inferences about the impact of parental characteristics on child characteristics in Ethiopia in the presence of unobserved factors such as inter-generationally-correlated genetic endowments, capital market constraints and purposive placement of different

² Countries are ranked according to their scores in terms of a child's chances of dying before her or his fifth birthday, of not enrolling in school and of being underweight. These three indicators are aggregated by simply calculating the average score between them for each period under review, meaning that they each have equal weighting in the index scores. Countries are then ranked according to their CDI scores. The lower the country's score the better.

public-sector infrastructure and programs. This is unlike all previous research efforts that studied some section of childhood poverty only on some section of childhood in the lifecycle perspective. As a result, the paper will use the lifecycle framework to examine the relative role of the household and the community in improving child health, nutrition and education. Second, the paper will try to capture the independent effect of family characteristics on child health, nutrition, and educational status by controlling for community level unobservables that are likely to confound the parameter estimate on both household-level covariates as well as community-level covariates (Rosenzweig and Wolpin 1986; Ghuman et al. 2005). This is mainly to capture the partial tendency of parental commitment towards inheriting poverty- related capital and thus see the trend of positive deviance in the intergenerational framework. Third, using the Young Lives panel data in the lifecycle perspective, the paper will examine the relationship between parental background and child wellbeing (as a summary outcome of early childhood health, nutrition, and subsequent child schooling) as part of the IGT poverty in Ethiopia.

Objectives

The main goal of the paper is to assess factors responsible for childhood poverty or wellbeing (captured using preschool health and nutrition, and subsequent cognitive development) as part of the intergenerational transmission of poverty in Ethiopia as observed in the initial stages of the lifecycle. More specifically, the specific objectives are:

- to identify the individual, household, and community level determinants of early child health and nutrition outcomes during preschool childhood.
- to analyze the broader parental and community related factors that determine child academic attainment or cognitive development in the second stage (child's years of primary school)
- to assess the causal relationship between preschool health and nutrition outcomes and the subsequent knowledge acquisition or cognitive development of the child

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the pursuit of identifying the gaps in the stock of knowledge between the intergenerational transmission (IGT) of poverty and the problem itself, a wealth of

empirical research on a multitude of sub-themes has been conducted. In this section, we have tried to briefly summarize previous empirical literature that we thought are relevant to the issue.

Health, Nutrition and Irreversibilities in Child Development:

A rich empirical literature is available on the separate long-term consequences of early childhood health and nutritional status on future wellbeing. Most literature cite child and maternal nutrition and health status along with the timing of shocks and interventions as the critical factors in determining the irreversibility of poverty transfers. Some of the key texts which discuss these links and processes, and the implications for interventions in relation to the irreversibilities of such transfers, are summarized below.

Alderman, Hoozeveen and Rossi (2008) examined the degree to which malnutrition leads to reduced lifetime earning capacity in Tanzania, due to both delays in schooling and declines in total schooling. The repercussions of malnutrition in childhood on subsequent learning and school performance are analyzed by using a unique longitudinal dataset. Similarly Harper (2004) highlighted the ‘crisis in childhood poverty of staggering proportions which has significant long-term implications’. His work demonstrated the importance of child, adolescent and maternal nutrition in determining health across a lifetime, and thus one of the key drivers of chronic poverty at the individual and household level. Furthermore, he showed that missed or poor education has long-term effects on other efforts to escape poverty, and childhood nurturing on aspirations and welfare.

Moore (2004) draws evidence from six South-East Asian countries to explore these linkages. He suggests that poverty experienced by youth is often linked to childhood deprivation and parental poverty, and, like poverty in childhood or in old age, it can have implications across an individual’s life-course and that of her or his household. Krause (2013) analyzed the impact of childhood malnutrition on educational achievement of Peruvian children. The paper tries to identify which type of nutritional status, and at what stage of childhood, is most critical for educational achievement. Averett and Stifel (2006) suggest that malnourished children tend to have lower cognitive abilities when compared to well-nourished children. Aubery (2012) claims that both short-term and long-term malnutrition have a detrimental effect on knowledge acquisition and that rainfall shocks have a long-lasting effect on children’s development in Madagascar. According to Sanchez (2009), compared to well-nourished children, children that became malnourished early in life are in cognitive disadvantage before school enrolment. By comparing the anthropometric measures of a Tanzanian preschooler with those of a child in a wealthy reference country, Lucia (2010) showed that malnutrition and poor health

experienced during early childhood have long-term effects on human capital growth.

Luna and Michael (2013) examined the causal channels in the European Union, through which being born poor affects the individual's economic outcomes as an adult, assessing the role of both parental and child human capital. They found that being poor in childhood significantly decreases the level of income in adulthood (of around 3,000 Euro on average), increasing the probability of being poor by 3%. Wagmiller and Adelman (2009) studied the long-term consequences of growing up poor in the United States. They found that individuals who grew up in poor families were much more likely to be poor in early adulthood. Moreover, the chances of being poor in early adulthood increased sharply as the time spent living in poverty during childhood increased. At all levels of poverty during childhood, African-Americans were more likely to be poor than whites in early and middle adulthood.

Education, Training and Reversals in Poverty Trajectories

Education is demonstrated to be a significant pathway for breaking the IGT poverty cycles and, potentially, for the “catching-up” of bad starts in life due to poverty. Maternal education is identified as particularly significant, especially in terms of nutrition information, for the wellbeing of children. Moreover, early enrolment in schools and sustained education are shown to influence adult income-earning potential (Moore 2004). Glewwe, Jacoby and King (2001) found that better nourished children performed significantly better in school, partly because they entered school earlier and thus had more time to learn but mostly because of greater learning productivity per year of schooling. They further suggested that a dollar invested in an early childhood nutrition program in a developing country could potentially return at least three dollar worth of gains in academic achievement, and perhaps much more. Moreover, Alderman, Behrman and Hoddinott (2004) examines the impact of preschool malnutrition on subsequent human capital formation in rural Zimbabwe using a maternal fixed effects – instrumental variables (MFE-IV) estimator with a long-term panel data set. Case and Ardington (2004) also used longitudinal data from a demographic surveillance area (DSA) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, to examine the impact of parental death on children's outcomes. They found significant differences in the impact of mothers' and fathers' deaths, and loss of a child's mother is a strong predictor of poor schooling outcomes. In Bangladesh, women receive less schooling, land and inherited assets than men, and also give up their inheritance to their brothers in exchange for economic and social support. While inter-generationally transferred assets, mostly controlled by the husband, increase levels of current assets and consumption, only husbands' schooling and inherited land, as well as women's social networks, are protective against chronic poverty according

to Kumar and Quisumbing (2011).

Using a unique data set from Ghana with comprehensive information on individual, family, community, school quality characteristics and a direct measure of intelligence together with test scores, Ampaabeng and Tan (2012), examined the long-term cognitive effects of the 1983 famine on survivors. They showed that differences in intelligence test scores can be robustly explained by the differential impact of the famine in different parts of the country and the impacts are most severe for children under two years of age during the famine. On the other hand, Glewwe and Miguel (2007) found that poor health and nutrition among children reduced their time in school and their learning during that time in Tanzania. They implied that programs or policies that increase children's health status could improve their education outcomes.

Likewise, Behrman et al. (2010) researched the impact of mothers' intellectual human capital and long-run nutritional status on children's human capital in Guatemala. In connection with this, they found that: maternal human capital is more important than suggested by the standard estimates; maternal cognitive skills have a greater impact than maternal schooling attainment on children's biological human capital; and for some important indicators of children's human capital, maternal biological capital has larger effect sizes than maternal intellectual capital (schooling and cognitive skills).

Health, nutrition, education and child development in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, there is no, comprehensive literature on inter-generational transmission of poverty and wellbeing. Yet, there are many separate studies focusing on some aspects of poverty dynamics.

Yisak (2012) analyzed children's experiences and perceptions of poverty in Ethiopia. In his paper he argues that children's lived experiences of poverty provide us with strong evidence to advance our knowledge of childhood poverty and develop apt policies to reduce it. Children's poverty experiences suggest the multidimensional, contextualized and intergenerational nature of child poverty. Moreover, Yisak and Tassew (2012) analyzed child wellbeing in connection with the incidence of shocks and the way to transform the Productive Safety Net Program beyond food security in Ethiopia. They argued that, amid limited resources and contexts of vulnerability to protracted shocks, there is a need for child-focused social protection.

Using data from Young Lives longitudinal survey, the impact of idiosyncratic and covariate economic shocks and the resulting work burden on children on the likelihood of children completing primary education or dropping out of primary school in

Ethiopia was investigated by Tasew and Adiam (2012). Their results indicate that both idiosyncratic shocks and covariate shocks have a statistically significant effect on the risk of children dropping out of primary school. Moreover, the amount of time children allocate to domestic activities, unpaid activities and paid labor are each found to have a positive effect on the probability of children dropping out of school.

Tasew (2010) examined the existence of permanent consequences of early childhood malnutrition and recovery of children from their early childhood malnutrition. Accordingly, he showed that the existence of permanent consequences of early childhood malnutrition and also the potential for the strong recovery of children from their initial early malnutrition and found significant effects on Z score of height-for-age and log of height, not only for post-natal economic shock but also for the pre-natal economic shocks, implying the long-term consequence of shocks on children's height.

Tasew and Liyousew (2012), examined the effects of preschool attendance on the cognitive development of urban children at the ages of 5 and 8 (measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and the Cognitive Development Assessment – Quantitative test (CDA-Q)) using data from Young Lives longitudinal survey in Ethiopia. They found that preschool attendance has a statistically significant positive impact on the cognitive development of children at the ages of both 5 and 8 years, with the bigger impact at the latter age. Moreover, they showed that preschool attendance has also a positive and statistically significant effect on primary school enrolment and progression through grades.

Using a mixed-method approach, Roelen and Camfield (2012) developed a hybrid taxonomy of child poverty and wellbeing that can be used for a dynamic analysis in the Ethiopian context. Accordingly, they argue that education is an area in which a child will only make progress once they are of school-going age, with educational indicators being unable to capture any aspect of children's well-being before or after they leave school. Similarly, they argue that under-nutrition indicators are particularly pertinent during infancy and are less able to capture the level of well-being of older children, although lack of food was clearly an important issue for children aged 13–14.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data

Availability of quality data is at the forefront of the considerable challenges in undertaking empirical estimates of causal relations pertaining to the IGT of poverty in developing

countries like ours. Behrman (2006) suggested that better data lessens such challenges. The ideal would be representative panel data with substantial detail, updated frequently on every member of the family over several generations.

To analyze the early age intergenerational transfers process of wellbeing from parents to a child, the paper used data from Young Lives longitudinal study³ in Ethiopia. As part of the young lives study, three rounds of quantitative surveys of households, children and communities have been conducted between 2002 and 2010 in Ethiopia. In 2002, two thousand (Younger Cohort) children aged 6 to 18 months and 1,000 (Older Cohort) children aged 7.5 to 8.5 years were selected using the Sentinel Site Surveillance System. Twenty sentinel sites were selected from five main regions of the country from which samples of 100 and 50 children were selected in each site corresponding to the Younger and Older Cohorts, respectively. Purposive sampling strategy⁴ is used to select the sentinel sites while households in each site are selected randomly. Therefore, the participants in this study are those Young Lives sample children of the Younger Cohort in Ethiopia who were surveyed at three points in their lives, each corresponding to a round of survey collection.

The Ethiopian Young Lives dataset is characterized by some peculiar features which make it ideal for poverty analysis. First of all the sample attrition in the succeeding waves of the survey was extremely low and is thus less likely to cause estimation problems. The total attrition rate is 1.33% and 2.13% for the second round and third round, respectively.

Put differently, in between round 1 and round 3, the sample attrition rate is 2.15% for the Younger Cohort and 2.10% for the Older Cohort, representing an annual attrition rate of 0.27%⁵ (Tassew and Adiam 2012).

Secondly, Young Lives dataset collected from all the three waves provides sufficient variables essential for childhood poverty analysis. The dataset provides sufficient information on community characteristics (environmental, social and economic); parental background; household and child education; livelihoods and asset framework; household food and non-food consumption and expenditure; social capital, economic changes and recent life history; and socio-economic status. Moreover, data on child care, education

³ The Young Lives project is a long-term international research project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in four developing countries (Ethiopia, India [in Andhra Pradesh], Peru and Vietnam) over 15 years. The study is tracking the development of 12,000 children (3000 children from each survey country), using longitudinal quantitative and qualitative research over a 15-year period.

⁴ Severity of food deficit, representativeness, and costs of tracking respondents in the future (and thus managing sample attrition) were the major purposes while selecting the sites.

⁵ Attrition does not include deaths, as the number of children who die is registered as a finding.

and activities; child health; anthropometry; caregivers perceptions and attitudes; school and activities, child time use; social networks, social skills and social support; feelings and attitudes; parents and household issues; child development; perception of the future, environment and household wealth is available in the dataset.

Finally, the young lives sample is found to be characteristic for the Ethiopian population. Reports on young lives second and third round surveys in Ethiopia compared a number of living standard indicators with two nationally representative Ethiopian samples - the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) in 2000. These reports suggested that, even if the poor have been over-sampled and the sample is not suited for monitoring child outcome indicators, the Young Lives sample is an appropriate and valuable instrument in analyzing causal relations and modeling child welfare; its longitudinal dynamics covers the diversity of the children in Ethiopia in a wide variety of attributes and experiences.

Methodology

The analytical framework binding the empirical analyses in the paper is drawn from different but complimentary sources. The household production model (HPM), as presented in Becker (1965 and 1981), is considered as the standard economic framework to analyze children's health, nutrition and educational attainment. In line with Becker's HPM, the generic analytic framework for analyzing individual and familial decisions related to the intergenerational transmission of well-being developed by Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) (Behrman 2006), is used as specification guide for econometric models used for analysis in this paper. Moreover, consistently with the generic framework, separate developments by Behrman and Deolalikar (1988) and Thomas and Strauss (1992) alongside Glewwe and Miguel (2007), are used to ease empirical modeling and estimation.

The generic framework developed by Behrman (2006) helps to solve various problems in making empirical inferences about the impact of parental characteristics on child characteristics in the presence of unobserved factors. Accordingly, a lifecycle framework with three lifecycle stages is developed to illustrate the causal effects of parental background on the capabilities of their adult children. The three consecutive lifecycle

stages represent: preschooling (from conception to about age five or six); schooling and adolescence (from age six or seven); and adulthood to the time of the data, respectively. Individual capability is determined by a production function in which the inputs are all previous lifecycle experiences, genetic and other unobserved endowments. The

framework uses the production function of adult intellectual abilities observed during adulthood (third period) to measure intergenerationally transmitted wellbeing in the three lifecycle setup.

However, there is no single standard measure for child wellbeing like adult intellectual ability; we could not estimate the parental production of child wellbeing for the two lifecycle stages using the reduced demand equations all together. Instead, two separate estimations are held for two stages of the child's lifecycle that it has accomplished so far. Therefore, instead of a single production function like that of intellectual functioning in the three-stage lifecycle framework, there are two production functions for both child health and educational experiences. Parent's utility maximization, constrained partly by these production functions at the respective lifecycle, provides the conditional demand relations for child health and schooling. The conditional demand relations obtained are thus used as a specification guide for the econometric models to follow.

Consistent with the three stages lifecycle framework, we have specified a two-period empirical model to analyze the process of inter-generational transfers of wellbeing in Ethiopia. Accordingly the production function of adult intellectual abilities now represents child wellbeing which is determined by parental production of child health and nutritional status in the first stage of life cycle (preschool), and parental production child primary schooling achievement which is represented by the child's cognitive development in the second stage of lifecycle. The summary measure of preschool experience (lifecycle stage 1) is child health and nutritional status which is represented by anthropometric measures; and the summary measure of primary school experience (lifecycle stage 2), is child academic achievement, which is represented by test scores of child cognitive development. This is where we consistently brought Behrman's generic framework and the two separate analytic frameworks developed by, Behrman and Deolalikar (1988), and Thomas and Strauss (1992); and Glewwe and Miguel (2007) together without losing generality.

In the first lifecycle stage, following Behrman and Deolalikar (1988), and Thomas and Strauss (1992), the static conditional demand function for child health and nutrition status is used as a specification guide to model the empirical model parental demand for school child health and nutrition. The next task is thus to choose for a suitable indicator for the dependent variable-child health and nutritional status. The most widely used indicators of child health are height-for-age z-score (HAZ), weight for-height z-score (WHZ) and weight-for-age z-score (WAZ). The Young Lives dataset included weighing the sample children and measuring their height. Of all the three indicators, Stunting (HAZ) is identified as a long-run measure of health as it captures the entire stock of nutrition accumulated since birth (Waterlow 1988). It reflects chronic under nutrition

during the most critical periods of growth and development in early life. Therefore, HAZ⁶ is used as dependent variable for the first objective of analyzing the child, household and community-level factors attributing major changes in preschool child health outcomes. Accordingly, the empirical model is defined as follows:

$$HAZ_{it}^1 = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^P \beta_j^X X_{jit}^1 + \sum_{j=1}^Q \beta_j^Z Z_{ji}^1 + \varepsilon_c^1 + \varepsilon_{it}^1 \dots \dots \dots 1$$

Where, HAZ_{it} is the child's height-for-age z-score at time t , The subscripts i and t refer to the individual and time, respectively. The s capture time-varying regressors and the s capture the inclusion of time-invariant regressors. The choice of the right hand side variables will be guided by the conditional health demand function in Behrman and Deolalikar (1988), and Thomas and Strauss (1992). There are two sources of unobservables in this empirical specification, and where, is the time-varying disturbance term which is identically, independently and normally distributed. The term captures the time-invariant community specific unobservable that affects child health.

Panel data obtained only from the first two rounds of the survey are used in this section. In order to break the correlations between the observed right-side variables of the empirical model and the corresponding compound disturbance terms that include unobserved determinants in addition to stochastic terms, instrumental variables (IV) or two-stage least squares 2SLS) estimation strategy is used. The IV or 2SLS estimation procedure basically consists of making first-stage estimates in which endogenous right-side variables in the relation of interest are regressed on the instrument set and then making second-stage estimates of the relation of interest that uses the predicted values of the endogenous right-side variables instead of the actual values (Wooldridge 2006).

Nevertheless, the robustness of the IV estimation procedure is conditional on the identification of good, valid and relevant instruments. Finding good instruments for all endogenous regressors in the models is often not easy, which is another estimation problem by itself. Instruments are expected to be good in the two senses, that is, the predicted values of the right-side endogenous variables will represent the variation in the right-side variable (the first characteristic of good instruments) but are not correlated with the disturbance term in the second stage (the second characteristics of good instruments). Good IV estimates, thus, can eliminate problems which arise due to omitted (unobserved) variables, endogeneity and random measurement error. Diagnostic tests for good instruments to identify the extent of bias due to "weak instruments" that

⁶ HAZ is defined as the percentage of children aged 0 to 59 months whose height for age is below minus two standard deviations (moderate and severe stunting) and minus three standard deviations (severe stunting) from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards.

do not satisfy the first condition for good instruments are conducted.

In the second lifecycle stage, considering the timing and realization of some factors like previous period child nutritional status along with other level inputs, a dynamic empirical model for child schooling achievement is specified following the framework developed

by Glewwe and Miguel (2007), using the simple two- period knowledge production function. The evolution of child knowledge acquisition is expressed as household's production process which is determined by current and past child, household, and community-level factors. These factors, coupled with child genetic and innate ability (including unobserved intelligence and learning motivation), influence children's schooling achievement and thus their cognitive development.

$$S_{2i} = \alpha + \beta HAZ_{1i} + \delta' X_{2i} + \gamma' P_{2h} + \lambda' Z_{2c} + \varepsilon_{2i} \dots \dots 2$$

Where S is child schooling achievement outcome measured by the above child cognitive test scores. These cognitive test scores depend on different factors. First of all, it depends on previous round child nutritional status, which are represented by (stunting) Height-for-Age z-scores. Accordingly, Height-for-Age as observed in the previous wave of data collection is used to measure children's nutritional history. In addition, child cognitive development depends on: X is vector of household characteristics (including, among others, income, mother's education and father's education), P is a vector of prices, Z is a vector of community characteristics, which might have an effect on child school enrollment. ε is a Gaussian disturbance term which is assumed to be distributed independently identically. Numbers in subscript indicate period of realization for each variable. And, the subscripts i and h , each indicate individual, household or community-level variables.

Unlike the first lifecycle stage, the analysis in this part is cross-sectional because of data limitations. This is mainly because data on cognitive test scores for the younger cohort child is first administered in the last round (Round 3). A child's learning productivity is partially determined by parental investments in early childhood education, health and nutrition. In addition to previous period child's health and nutritional status and current community-level factors, parental inputs in the model can be broadly classified as inputs that are endogenous and reflect parental choices or preferences, and inputs that are exogenous and not subject to parental choice in the child cognitive development acquiring process, according to Todd and Wolpin (2004). Moreover, nutrition and parent's inputs are functions of, among other things, child learning efficiency or 'endowment' which

represents factors, such as ability and motivation, that are out of parent's control but are influenced by home environment as well as by genetics.

The presence of endogeneity of such regressors because of unobservable heterogeneity in the model implies violation of the basic assumptions of OLS estimates - which is the source of the common estimation problem in the production function approach to studying child outcomes. Such violations can generally lead to omitted variable or simultaneity bias. Estimating the model using OLS, with the presence of endogenous regressors such as unobserved time invariant child innate ability as well as parent preferences toward child academic achievement, are therefore likely to produce biased parameter estimates of these regressors.

As a result, a set of control variables are introduced to reduce the omitted variable bias and improve the robustness of the estimation results. Finding a valid, strong instrument to deal with endogeneity due to these violations is challenging. The strategy through which the above challenges are accounted for is the standard approach, which is to follow a two-prong strategy, whereby as many households as child controls, together with IV, are jointly implemented (Glewwe and Elizabeth 2001; Alderman, Hoddinott and Kinsey (2006).

4. STUDY VARIABLES

Child wellbeing summarized by preschool health nutrition and later cognitive development is conventionally known to be determined by various factors at individual child, household and community level under different socio-economic and environmental setup. Backed by indications from well-established empirical evidence and the empirical model specified earlier, this section presents description and justification of variables (both dependent and independent) used for the analysis in the paper.

1. Dependent Variables

Height for Age Z – Score (HAZ)

According to the WHO, stunting (HAZ) is the percentage of children aged 0 to 59 months whose height for age is below minus two standard deviations (moderate and severe stunting) and minus three standard deviations (severe stunting) from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards. HAZ is identified as a long-run measure of health as it captures the entire stock of nutrition accumulated since birth (Waterlow 1988). It reflects chronic under nutrition during the most critical periods of growth and development in early life.

Therefore, HAZ is used as dependent variable to achieve the first objective of analyzing the child, household and community-level factors attributing major changes in preschool child health outcomes.

The Young Lives dataset contains information on the weight and height of the sampled children. Child height was measured to the nearest 0.1 cm using height boards made for the purpose. These measures, coupled with the age of the child, measured in days based on the birth and interview date is used to obtain HAZ. Table 4.1 below provides the anthropometric measures for the younger cohort children in 2002 and 2006.

Table 4.1 Anthropometric measures for the younger cohort children

Younger cohort children	2002	% age	2006	% age
Stunted	830	41.5	599	31.32
Severely stunted	425	21.26	157	8.21
Thinness	305	15.25	163	8.5
Severely thinness	127	6.35	42	2.19
Under weight	634	31.71	455	23.79
Severely underweight	284	14.2	77	4.02

Source: UK Data Archive, 2014

The Z score for height for age (HAZ) ranges from -8.24 to 8.7 with mean of -1.2. The regional mean value of HAZ ranges from -1.37 in SNNP to -0.77 in Addis Ababa, whereas it is -1.3, -1.21, and -1.17 for Amhara, Tigray, and Oromia regional states, respectively. Moreover, the mean value of HAZ is -1.27 and -1.2 for male and female children of the younger cohort sample, respectively. And finally, the mean value of HAZ is -0.96 for children who live in urban areas and -1.35 for those who live in rural areas.

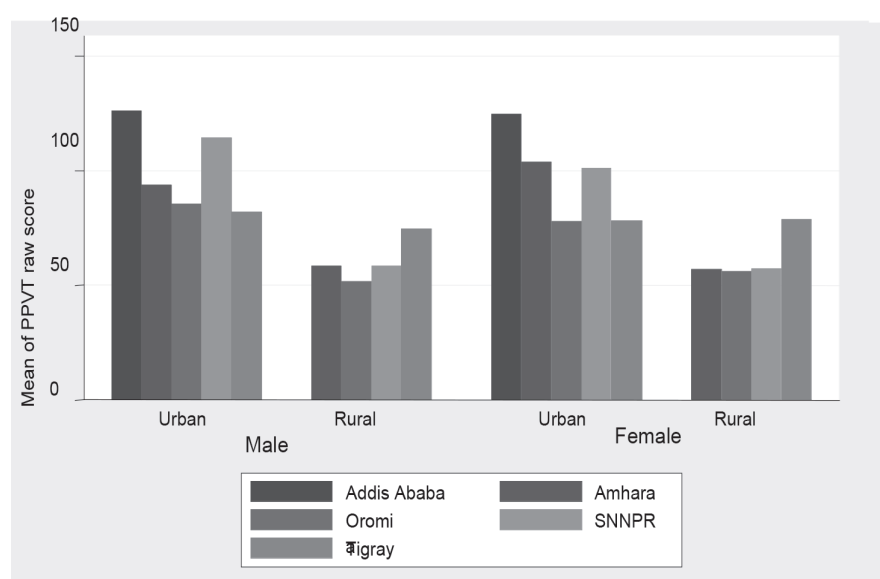
Generally, as shown in table 4.1, from the sample of 1999 children interviewed in the first round 830 children i.e., 41.5% are stunted; 425 (21%) are severely stunted. Moreover, in round two, 599 children (31%) from 1912 children are found to be stunted and 8% i.e., 157 children, are found to be severely stunted. Likewise, 15% and 8% of children are found to be wasted in the first and second rounds, respectively. In addition, in the first and second rounds, only 6% and 2% of the sample children are found to be severely wasted. In addition, 32% and 14% of children in round one and 24% and 4% of children in round two among the younger cohort children are found to be underweight and severely underweight, respectively.

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)

The PPVT is a test of vocabulary recognition that has been widely used as a general measure of cognitive development (Cueto et al. 2009). Its main objective is to measure vocabulary acquisition in persons from 2.5 years old to adulthood. The test is individually administered, untimed, norm-referenced and orally delivered. PPVT raw score recorded in 2010 (round 3) of the Young Lives data is used as dependent variable to analyze parent’s demand for child knowledge acquisition and thus their cognitive development. The raw scores of the PPVT ranged from 0-204 and the exam was administered in local languages in Ethiopia spoken by the child and by the field worker who administered the exam. It consists of 17 sets of 12 words each. Children start the test at a particular set depending on their age. They then move up or down depending on their responses.

For the younger cohort sample, the mean value of PPVT raw score is distributed evenly among male and female children for the whole sample. Similarly, the mean value is also relatively the same for children living in rural areas in all regions of the country except Addis Ababa. On the other hand, mean PPVT value is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Regionally, children from Addis Ababa have higher mean value of PPVT, followed by SNNPR.

Figure 1. Summary for variable: PPVT raw score by categories of region, sex and sentinel site



Source: UK Data Archive, 2014

Moreover, from the data, the mean PPVT value is 125.4 for Addis Ababa; 77.3 for SNNPR; 77.43 for Tigray regional state; and 68 and 62 for Amhara and Oromia regional states. For the total sample the mean PPVT value is 79.15.

II. Explanatory Variables

A set of individual child, household and community-level variables administered to the younger cohort children in the Young Lives dataset are used as regressors for the empirical analysis in this paper. At the household level, variables amplifying information on parental demographics and background, household composition, household education, livelihoods and socioeconomic status are used as regressors in the econometric analysis. At individual-child level, child activities including their time spending, their background and demographic characteristics and endowments are used for analysis. Moreover, we have used community level infrastructure variables that characterize the environment where the child lives such as availability of water and sanitation facility, availability of immunization and electricity and school characteristics.

Well-established empirical literature confirms that household characteristics have a significant role to play in determining child wellbeing. In connection with this, paternal involvement has been associated with children having greater self-esteem, higher educational achievement and more secure gender identification in developed countries. Moreover, the effect of parental (and in particular maternal) education on children's health and education outcomes has been researched extensively, but less is known about the influence that sibling's education can have on a child's educational outcomes. In addition to this, the effect of parental (and in particular maternal) education on children education outcomes has been researched extensively. Less is known about the influence that sibling's education can have on a child's educational outcomes.

Furthermore, asset base is critical to enhance opportunities and reduce the vulnerability of poor people's livelihoods. Besides, the household was a source of social capital for the children when they were younger, but may become less important as the children grow older and establish networks independent of the household. It is important to find out about the household's influence on the child through the direct affects of intra-household dynamics as well as the indirect effects of the social capital of the household on the children.

Components of wealth index as the main instrument used in Young Lives to measure the socioeconomic status of the household is used in the analysis. Wealth index (*wi*) is composed of three sub-indexes, i.e., household quality index (*hq*), access to service index (*sv*), and ownership of consumer durables or simply consumer durables index

(*cd*). These indexes were estimated consistently across the three rounds, and only those variables consistent across the three rounds are considered. Wealth index is thus defined as a simple average of these three sub-indexes as follows:

$$W_{it} = \frac{[hq_{it} + sv_{it} + cd_{it}]}{3}$$

Household quality index is a simple average of dummy variables constructed for crowding (scaled sleeping rooms per person), main material of walls, main material of roof, and main material of floor. Similarly, access to service index is computed as a simple average of dummies for accesses to electricity, safe drinking water, sanitation and fuel for cooking. Moreover, the index for ownership of consumer durables is constructed as a simple average of a set of dummies for a list of consumer durables that take the value 1 if the household owns at least one for each commodity. The list of these consumer durables is country-specific in the Young Lives dataset. For Ethiopia, the list is a basket of ten commodities - radio, television, bicycle, motorbike, automobile, landline phone, mobile phone, table and chair, sofa, and bedstead.

The composite index may be used in place of the individual components to estimate the total effect of ‘wealth’. Individual components may also be associated with outcomes in their own right, but inferences on the ‘wealth’ effect should not be made from analyses that use only one or some of the components.

Conventionally acknowledged empirical literature also supports that child and community-level characteristics have a significant role to play in determining child wellbeing. Poverty affects the roles and responsibilities assumed by children and the ways in which they use their time. While the information about school and work is collected over the previous 12 months, the previous day’s activities are used to give an idea of the balance of time spent on different activities by the child. Further, domestic work and chores often have significant impacts on the lives and wellbeing of children, in particular, on their school attendance, and on the time they are able to spend studying. Finally, community- level infrastructure variables that characterize the environment where the child lives such as availability of water and sanitation facility, availability of immunization and electricity, school characteristics are used as regressors in the empirical analysis in this paper.

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics of some explanatory variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
Household size	5.981884	2.082554
Household quality index	0.278938	0.203151
Consumer durables index	0.194537	0.189463
Service quality index	0.349758	0.264462
Wealth index	0.274522	0.182671
Number of milk animals	1.326087	1.843754
Number of males aged 0-5 years	0.379808	0.570297
Number of females aged 0-5 years	0.374828	0.569526
Hours per day spent caring for HH members	0.68872	1.24989
Hours per day spent on household chores	1.234307	1.38796
Hours per day spent on family activities	1.114428	2.013322
Hours per day spent working	0.011194	0.252882
Hours per day spent at school	3.683111	3.183517
Hours per day spent studying	0.690895	0.847572
Hours per day spent playing	6.310317	3.658337

Source: UK Data Archive, 2014

Table 4.2 shows descriptive statistics of some explanatory variables used in the paper. Generally, household-level variables used in the paper include: household size, care giver's education, age of the household head, sex of the household head, education of household head, household quality index, service quality index, consumer durables index, number of milk animals, number of males aged 0-5 years, and number of females aged 0-5yrs. Moreover, at individual-child level, we have used variables such as child sex, father's age, father's education, mother's age, mother's education, hours per day spent on household chores, hours per day spent on family activities, hours per day spent working, hours per day spent for studying, hours per day spent for playing, previous period height for age z score. And, at community level we have used access to electricity, access to toilet, access to drinking water, price of cooking oil, school type, and distance from the school.

5. MAIN FINDINGS

Determinants of Preschool Child Health and Nutrition

Panel data obtained only from the first two rounds of the Young Lives survey are used to analyze the factors that determine children's preschool health and nutrition status. With the aim of breaking the correlations between the observed right-side variables of the empirical models and the corresponding compound- disturbance terms that include unobserved determinants in addition to stochastic terms, we have used instrumental variables (IV) or two-stage least squares (2SLS) estimation strategy.

The 2SLS regression result presented in table 5.1 shows that the summary outcome variable for preschool child health and nutritional status – HAZ score - is found to be significantly influenced by child, household and community-level factors. Sex of the index child (male dummy), mother's education and father's education are individual-child level factors that are found to have a significant effect on children's preschool health and nutrition. At the household level, children's preschool health and nutritional status is found to be significantly determined by educational level of the household head, household quality index, consumer-durables index and the number of male and female children aged 1-5 years other than the index child living in the household. Moreover, access to public toilet and electricity in the surrounding community are the community-level factors that are found to have detrimental effect on children's preschool height for age z-score. Among these factors, only the numbers of male and female children aged 1-5 years of age other than the index child living in the household have negative relationship with HAZ for the index child.

The regression result in table 5.1 also shows that boys are more likely to be stunted than girls. This is consistent with results from earlier studies in Ethiopia and in other African countries, and is largely attributable to possible genetic differences between male and female children. Moreover, this differential is perhaps attributed to the fact that girls are genetically more robust than boys in nutrition absorption and that the energy requirement is higher for boys than girls.

The 2SLS regression result also reveals that preschool child health and nutrition in the first lifecycle stage is found to have a strong positive relationship with parental and head education level. As in the case of many studies, our paper has also found that parent's as well as head's education level has a significant role to play in determining children's preschool health and nutritional status.

Table 5.1 2SLS estimation results for Height for Age Z score

Explanatory variables	Dependent variable: Height for Age Z score	
	Coefficient	Std. Err
Care giver's education	-0.12028	0.075603
Age of the household head	-0.00751	0.008707
Sex of the household head	-0.17963	0.163302
Education of household head	0.02959*	0.011219
Household quality index	0.839119*	0.171971
Consumer durables index	0.812089*	0.281809
Access to electricity	0.225299*	0.077184
Access to toilet	0.113452	0.048556
Access to drinking water	-0.0497	0.048083
Price of cooking oil	0.065656	0.126509
No. of milk animals	0.022597	0.01391
No. of males aged 0-5 yrs	-0.10371*	0.046035
No. of females aged 0-5yrs	-0.06645*	0.043921
Household size	-0.00084	0.022012
Child sex	0.276294*	0.062673
Father's age	0.000315	0.009977
Father's education	0.034065*	0.011123
Mother's age	0.005912	0.00712
Mother's education	0.061963*	0.031479
Constant	-1.79047	0.325842

*Variables with association significant at 0.05

This is not surprising as parental education (especially maternal education) is known to play a significant role in preschool child health and nutritional achievement in developing countries. This may be because of the fact that parents, especially heads, have a dominant role in intra household bargaining in addition to the derived role that parental health and nutrition knowledge would play in determining children's preschool health and nutrition performance. Well- educated parents combine both indigenous health and nutritional knowledge and practices with modern scientific health-seeking behavior for the betterment of their children's health and their nutritional intake. In addition to this, well-educated household heads and parents tend to give quality care for their children by choosing better health and nutritional inputs.

Two components of household wealth index, i.e., consumer durables index and household quality index, are found to be positively related with height for age Z score of children

below 5 years of age. This is mainly attributed to the fact that children growing up in well-built and well-furnished houses are nurtured well and have better health and nutritional status. Households that possess TV and radio, for instance, have updated information about nutrition and households that have refrigerator can provide well-preserved and healthy food for their children; these are manifestations of quality health care and nurture. Households with higher consumer durables index and higher household quality index, therefore, possess quality houses and child-friendly homes that reduce children's malnourishment.

In addition, the empirical result indicates that a significant portion of the variations in raising healthy and well-nourished children are determined by household composition and birth order. The regression result shows that the higher the number of children aged between 0-5 years and living in the household other than the index child, the more likely the child will be malnourished. This can be explained by lower resource share to the index child in the distribution of allocation of the household's resources allotted for its preschool health and nutrition. Though allocation may not be fair and equitable among family members, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia, parents are expected to allocate resources among all members of the household. Accordingly, as the number of children living in the household aged between years 0-5 increase (such as giving birth to a new child), parents are expected to redirect and redistribute resources to all members of the household, including the index child. This resource redistribution will decrease the resource share of the index child which is allotted for its health and nutritional need. Reductions in such resources will subsequently compromise children's early health and nutritional attainment captured by their height for age Z scores.

This result can also be explicated in terms of birth order; birth order is significantly associated with height for age Z score of the sample children. More specifically, higher birth order is associated with stunting for children because young children born in close succession have to share scarce resources and are thus more likely to suffer from malnutrition than children in smaller families.

Moreover, community-level infrastructure variables that characterize the environment where the child lives, such as the availability of water and sanitation facility, immunization services and electricity, influence children's health in the first five years of their childhood. At the community level, we find that provision of electricity and availability of public toilet are positively associated with improvements in children's health and nutritional status. Children residing in communities with electricity have 0.22 standard deviation higher Z scores compared to their counterparts residing in communities without electricity. Moreover, children residing in communities with public toilet have 0.11 standard deviation higher Z scores compared to their counterparts residing in communities without a public toilet.

Determinants of Child Cognitive Development

Table 5.2 provides estimation results for the determinants of child cognitive development captured by PPVT raw score. Unlike the first lifecycle stage, the analysis in this part is

cross-sectional because of data limitations. This is mainly because data on cognitive test scores for the younger cohort child is first administered in the third round (2010). The empirical result obtained from this cross-sectional data shows that children's educational achievement and thus their cognitive development is found to be significantly influenced by individual child and household-level factors as shown in table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Estimation results for PPVT raw score

Explanatory variables	Dependent variable: Height for Age Z score	
	Coefficient	Std. Err
School type	0.643243	0.034746
Hrs/day spent on HH chores	-1.26347	0.807834
Hrs / day spent on family activities	-2.39515*	0.613888
Hrs per day spent working	-5.71665	4.276327
Hrs / day spent studying	7.496196*	1.355016
Hrs per day spent playing	-2.55471*	0.533091
Distance from the school	0.043048	0.039369
Mother's education	-0.08497	0.188411
Mother's age	0.503038	1.097064
Father's education	0.160775	0.599578
Previous period HAZ	1.109979	0.769621

Table 5.2 *Cont'd.*

Explanatory variables	Dependent variable: Height for Age Z score	
	Coefficient	Std. Err
Sex of the index child	-1.52097	1.975972
Caregiver's education	0.753946*	0.272763
Caregivers age	-0.34231	1.076113
No. of males aged 0-5 yrs	-4.3475*	1.581022
No. of females aged 0-5yrs	-2.86673*	1.56535
Service quality index	1.58646	4.930249
Consumer durables index	43.07953*	6.753432
Household quality index	17.18328*	5.466242
Education of the HH head	-0.05661	0.603575
Sex of the HH head	0.975104	8.380382
Age of the HH head	-0.36567	0.468422
Constant	-5.85992	11.71906

*Variables with association significant at 0.05

Accordingly the variations in the children's cognitive ability in the beginning of the second life-cycle stage is attributed to hours per day spent caring for household members, hours per day spent on household chores, hours per day spent on domestic tasks such as farming and family business, hours per day spent studying outside school, hours per day spent on leisure activities, caregiver's education, father's literacy level, number of male and female children aged between 0-5 years living in the household, consumer durables index, and household quality index.

Among these significant factors, hours per day spent caring for household members, hours per day spent on household chores, hours per day spent on domestic tasks such as farming and working on family business, and hours spent playing and on leisure activities alongside the number of male and female children aged between 0-5 years living in the household are found to have a strong negative effect on PPVT raw score in the estimation result. On the other hand, hours per day spent studying outside school alongside caregiver's education, father's literacy level, consumer durables index and household quality index are found to have a strong positive relationship with children's PPVT raw score. In the next paragraphs, we present a separate discussion of the results found for the factors that significantly determine parental conditional demand for well-educated and developed children.

Children's time allocation is found to be significantly associated with their educational achievement and thus their cognitive skills. As it is conventionally known, child-students' time spent on non-educational activities will reduce their performance towards a better educational attainment. On the contrary, children's time spent on their education and a related activity is found to have a strong positive association with their educational achievement. More specifically, there exists a tradeoff between children's educational achievement and their time spent in non-educational activities. As mentioned above, these activities include time spent caring for household members, on household chores, participating in domestic tasks like farming and working on the family business and on playing and leisure activities. On the other hand, the number of hours spent by children for studying outside school is directly related with their PPVT raw score. It is clear that children's time spent studying outside school is expected to have a positive relationship with their educational achievement. This is perhaps because of the fact that children who spend more time on their education will be effective in their improvement.

Moreover, as children spend much of their time in domestic household activities like caring for family members or participating in household farm activities or any other family business, they will end up with lower quality time left for their education. And the same holds true for leisure as well, i.e., as a child-student spends much of his/her time playing instead of studying, his/her PPVT raw score will be lower because of the same

reason mentioned above.

All in all, children's time as a major resource and its allotment are found to have a strong determining relationship with children's educational achievement and thus their cognitive development. And, the sign of the relationship between the number of hours a child spends on a given activity and its PPVT raw score depends how much the activity is related with the child's education.

The regression result also shows that children's cognitive development in the second lifecycle stage is dependent up on paternal literacy level and caregiver's education. As it is true in many research findings, our study also shows that parent's as well as caregiver's education level has a significant role to play in determining children's educational attainment. This is perhaps because well-educated caregivers and literate parents (especially fathers) would tend to choose better educational inputs for their children. Here we find that paternal literacy has a significant contribution towards a better cognitive development of children. This is surprising especially in conditions where maternal education is known to play a significant role in child educational attainment. This may be because of the fact that fathers have a dominant role in intra-household bargaining in addition to the resultant role that parental education would play in determining children's educational attainment and thus their cognitive development.

The regression result in table 5.2 also indicates that household wealth components – consumer durables index and household quality index – are found to be positively related with children's PPVT raw score. Generally speaking, children of households with higher consumer durables index and higher household quality index have a higher PPVT raw score and thus a higher educational achievement and cognitive development. This is mainly credited to the fact that children growing up in quality houses and thus nurtured well have better educational attainment explained by a higher PPVT raw score.

Our empirical result also shows that household composition and birth order have a significant contribution towards raising children with a better cognitive development and educational achievement. In connection with this, the regression result shows that the higher the number of children aged between 0-5 years and living in the household other than the index child, the lower children's educational attainment and thus their cognitive development. This can be perhaps explained by the distribution of allocation of the household's resources for children's preschool health, nutritional need and their later educational inputs. Parents are expected to allocate resources among their children for their education and health. Accordingly, as the number of children aged between years 0-5 increase, parents are expected to redistribute resources from other members of the household, including from children in school. The resource allocated for children in

school will decrease, which will in turn decrease the educational input that the parents (the household) offers, which will again reduce children's educational attainment and cognitive development indicated by lower PPVT raw scores.

Finally, though it's not the case in most of the research findings so far, our finding shows that preschool (one period lag) child health and nutritional status measured in terms of Height for Age Z score is found to be insignificant to have a strong influence on PPVT raw score at 5% significance level. However, at 10% significance level, HAZ is significant enough to have a considerable influence on children's educational attainment and cognitive development after one period. This is perhaps because of the fact that the PPVT raw score used in the analysis is administered in early grades of primary school, which may not be suitable to capture the lagged effect of HAZ on child cognitive development.

6. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Childhood poverty (wellbeing) as part of the overall intergenerational wellbeing in Ethiopia, is assessed using the first two lifecycle stages in the light of the conventional three-period lifecycle framework. These periods are the preschool period which covers children's age from their conception to their fifth birthday and schooling which covers children's years of primary school. In the first period, children's health and nutritional status as measured by their height for age Z score is considered as a summary outcome variable to capture their wellbeing.

In order to identify the major factors that affect preschool child health and nutritional status, we have employed 2SLS Instrumental Variable random effects regression. Accordingly, children's height for age Z score is found to be significantly influenced by child, household and community-level factors. Sex of the index child (male dummy), mother's education and father's education are individual child-level factors that are found to have a significant effect on children's preschool health and nutrition.

At the household level children's preschool health and nutritional status is found to be significantly determined by educational level of the household head, household quality index, consumer durables index and the number of male and female children aged 1 -5 years other than the index child living in the household. Moreover, access to public toilet and electricity are the community-level factors that are found to have a detrimental effect on children's preschool height for age Z score. Among these factors, only the numbers of male and female children aged 1-5 years of age other than the index child living in the household have a negative relationship with HAZ for the index child.

In the second period, i.e., lifecycle stage two, children's wellbeing is captured by their cognitive development which is measured using PPVT raw score. In order to obtain the major factors associated with children's educational attainment and thus their cognitive development, we have employed IV estimation strategy. From the regression result, we have obtained that children's time allocation, paternal and caregiver's educational status, household wealth, household composition and birth order are the major factors that our IV regression result shows a significant relationship with children's educational achievement and cognitive development measured in the form of PPVT raw score. Moreover, the link variable between the two lifecycle stages (one period lagged value of HAZ) is found to be weakly significant to determine subsequent educational attainment and thus children's cognitive development.

Collectively speaking, household-level factors take the lion's share in determining children's health and nutritional status during their preschool years. During their years of primary school, on the other hand, children's cognitive ability is dominantly determined by both child and household-level factors. However, the result shows that community-level factors explain only a small share of the variations in child wellbeing outcome variables in both periods. By and large, from the regression result we can observe that household-level factors have a dominant role in determining child wellbeing.

Based on the results obtained in this study, we identify the following policy implications for interventions towards the betterment of children and their wellbeing as children and future adults in the country.

- Policy interventions aiming at reducing childhood poverty should be targeted mainly at the household level since they have a principal role in determining child wellbeing.
- Adult education schemes for parents at the national level can provide them with basic as well as updated knowledge about raising healthy, well-nurtured and well-educated children.
- Nutritious food supply programs implemented at the lower level health posts in the country, especially for infants, and school feeding programs at primary schools can also improve child wellbeing.
- Awareness creation should be undertaken among parents to raise their understanding of the intergenerational paybacks of raising healthy and developed children for one self and for the country in general.
- Parents must also be well informed about family planning, using different media, to have wider birth gaps in order to produce quality children.

- Child labor law enforcement in the country must also be strengthened especially for school aged children.
- Enacting a more favorable and modest labor law on child rights which considers the nature and type of work that they are engaged in during their childhood could add to children's wellbeing.
- Infrastructural development, especially power supply and sanitation facilities, must be expanded throughout the country.

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The Rights of Children in Ethiopia: Empirical Investigations from Multidisciplinary Perspectives

Edited by

Alula Pankhurst, Yeraswork Admassie, Yitayew Alemayehu

Children and issues affecting them have been the subject of numerous research papers by graduate students of Addis Ababa University (AAU). This book brings together chapters based on condensed and revised versions of a few notable examples of theses (and a dissertation) that have a broad focus on child rights issues produced in different departments of AAU. The chapters are based on collaborative efforts between the graduate students and their advisors and were reworked on the basis of comments from the editors. The chapters deal with children's work on the street, child marriage, the wellbeing of children living with stepparents and child poverty. Investigating the lived world of children, the chapters demonstrate the complexities in translating global norms of child rights into locally situated realities.

The Center for Human Rights is an autonomous academic unit of Addis Ababa University. It promotes empirically informed scholarship on human rights integrating theoretical and methodological approaches from various academic disciplines. The Center also offers MA and PhD programs in the interdisciplinary study of human rights.



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