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Early Marriage: Trends, Causes, Consequences and Prospects in Selected Kebeles of East Gojjam Administrative Zone, Amhara National Regional State, North Western Ethiopia

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Abstract:

This study examined the causes, consequences, trends and prospects of early marriage in Yenebrna and Garam kebeles by collecting primary data from 163 participants (112 respondents, 8 key informants and 42 focus group discussants) in addition to extensive review of secondary sources. It employed simple random sampling technique to collect quantitative data and purposive sampling technique to collect qualitative one using two research designs: cross sectional and approximating cross sectional with longitudinal research designs. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and thematic and content analysis

The findings showed that all children born in the study kebeles are forced to marry in their early childhoods by their parents. Yet, unlike to the usual case in which early marriage of females occurs in many societies, the studied communities practice early marriage for boys and girls without any level of distinction and irrespective of their differential levels of knowledge about its ill effects. The practice of early marriage is taken for granted as a normal way of life increasingly resulting in marriage of minors of every family. It is also found that early married children face a number of problems: fear to play with their peers both in and out of the school; reduced confidence and school dropout. Economic and cultural reasons, and parental and peer influence are the main reasons for parents to marry their children while all children accept their parents' decisions as a matter of good conduct; immaturity to decide on their life and socio-economic deprivation. Unlike to parents of other Ethiopian societies following Orthodox Christian religion who marry their children, at least theoretically, unto their death, all parents in the studied communities marry their children with full knowledge of their divorce.

Unless regular, continuous and appropriate awareness raising interventions accompanied by practical actions of forbidding early marriage were put in place, it is impossible to break age old inbuilt social facts of early marriage in the studied communities. Reducing the practice, therefore, requires unreserved mobilization of residents, religious leaders, school teachers, kebele administrators, through concerted action of multidisciplinary professionals from development organizations, and non-governmental and governmental organizations.

Keywords: Early marriage, child, cause and consequences of early marriage

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Early marriage is a global problem whose impacts surpass the wellbeing and life options of affected individuals and their families to national development. Though it has been one of the neglected issues for a long, recently it has received global attention. As a result, bourgeoning of literature on the subject has been emerging. East Africa Regional Conference on Child Marriage (June 2013), for example, has indicated both the breadth of the problem and growing concern on it in the following statements:

In the next decade, 100 million girls are expected to marry before they are 18 years old. In Africa over 42% of girls are married before they reach the age of 18, with millions of girls being given away just before they attain puberty. Furthermore, 31 out of the 41 countries where the prevalence rates of child marriage are more than 30% are African countries. East Africa continues to have the largest burden of child marriage in Africa.

Similarly, in Ethiopia, 24.7% of women aged 15-19 were ever married, out of which 8.1% were married before age 15 (EDHS 2011). The situation is worse in the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) where 59.5% of women aged 20-24 years were married before age 18; the median age at first marriage for the region has remained below 16 years for the last 10 years; and more than 53.3% of women gave birth before the age of 18 (EDHS 2011). Being part of the region, there is no exception to Garam and Yenebrna kebeles where this study was conducted.

Though the Ethiopian regional authorities started campaign against early marriage in 2003; marriage before the age of 18 years was criminalized by the family code of the ANRS since June 2003 (Berihun and Aspen 2009) and there are also a number of strategies employed by governmental and non-governmental organizations to reduce the problem, significant changes were not brought to date.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Early marriage is a global problem having complex causes and cross sectional impacts. Its untold impacts for divorce, prostitution, school drop outs and illiteracy have been enlisted by many studies. Similarly, its health, social and economic impacts have recently been glorified and contributed for its growing concern. Though Facilitator for Change (FC) has been working since 2012 in seven kebeles of the Gozamin district and made significant changes in many kebeles in reducing early marriage, Yenebirna, Giraram and Enartakebeles, in this order, still ranked the top in practicing it.

Similarly, “the community in Gozamin district developed bylaws that restricts marriage age to at least 18, in contrast, resistance and the atmosphere of surveillance and punishment have in some cases forced early marriages to persist “undercover”” (FC, Gozamin community development for children project, 2012:20). Despite attempts to reduce the problem since 2012 through intervention by Gozamin community development for children project, early marriage continues to be widely practiced in Yenebirna, Giraram and Enarta kebeles of Gozamin district. As a result, in East Gojjam Administrative Zone (EGAZ), where this study was conducted, Kerebih and Mulunesh (2014), for example, have indicated the rate of early marriage to be 87%.

This urges to have contextual, clear and deep understanding of factors behind early marriage; its trends and prospects; and situations of early married boys and girls so as to develop practical intervention plans that involve key stakeholders of the community. Yet, this study was only conducted in Yenebirna and Giraramkebeles for their relative proximity and higher rate of early marriage. To this effect, this research attempts to address the following objectives.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This research generally aims to forward contextual ways of dealing with early marriage through investigation of its trends, causes, consequences and prospects. It specifically aimed at:

- ✓ point out the major causes of early marriage in the selected kebeles
- ✓ investigate the trends of early marriage
- ✓ examine the situations of early married boys and girls and
- ✓ Indicate the prospects of early marriage in the research sites.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area and Period

This study was conducted in Yenebirna and Giraramkebeles from December 26/2015 to March 30/ 2016. These kebeles were purposively selected for failing to reduce the practice despite three years’ interventions.

2.2. Research Methods and Sampling Technique

For the sake of simplicity and clarity, the discussion of each sampling technique and sample size were bravely included in each of the research methods employed in this research as discussed below.

2.2.1. Survey

To collect survey data pertinent to the objectives of the study, both open and closed ended questionnaire items were prepared, in Amharic language, (National, regional and local language), and employed. While self-administered questionnaires were distributed for those willing and able to answer, those who are unable to answer because of illiteracy were addressed through researcher administered questionnaires.

In order to collect data from representative samples, researchers attempted to obtain list of households in both kebele administrations. Accordingly, while the researchers are able to know that in Giraram kebele there are 1774 households of which 215 were headed by females while the remaining 1559 by males, and in Yenebirna kebele where out of 1241 households, 1085 were headed by males and 156 by females, in 2016, it become impossible to obtain list of kebele residents. As a result, researchers have opted to search list of residents from health extension officers of both kebeles. There, it is found that the lists and total number of kebele population was organized in separate gots (sub-divisions of kebeles) which enabled the researchers to proportionally select respondents from each kebele. Accordingly, survey data were administered to a total of 112 respondents drawn from parents of early married boys and girls using simple random sampling. More specifically, while 60 were responded to survey in Giraram, the remaining 52 did the same in Yenebirna kebele with a non-response rate of zero since the data were collected by researchers’ themselves and two assistants in each kebele.

2.2.2. Key Informant Interview

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared administered to knowledgeable persons pertinent to the objectives of the study (factors and consequences of early marriage, and existing intervention programs to deal with it). Key informants were purposively recruited from respected elders of the community (3); cluster level association representatives (2); police (1) and school principals (2) in each kebele.

2.2.3. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

To collect additional and in depth data, a total of five FGDs were also conducted to elicit information pertinent to the objectives of the study by recruiting discussants using purposive sampling. While two FGDs were conducted separately with early married girls (6) and boys (6) in Yenabrna School; one FGD was conducted only with early married boys (6) in Giraram; the fourth and fifth FGD with parents of early married boys and girls and those who were themselves married before the age of 18, each consisting of six participants in both kebeles.

The main themes included in the focus group guide were: the status of early marriage as perceived by each group; the associated reproductive and health issues, physiological, psychological, and socioeconomic problems; policy and advocacy environments; and livelihood status. In addition to these, the FGD guide attempted to address factors that have positive as well as negative impact on early marriage, parental attitudes, and suggestions for intervention strategies.

2.2.4. In-depth interview

To collect additional data and triangulate it, this study has also employed in depth interview with 10 participants who were purposively recruited from early married girls (4); parents of early married girls (3); and women and men who are now leaders of the family but were married before age 18 (3). To collect data, interview guide was prepared.

3. Results

3.1. Introduction

This study involved a total of 162 participants. From these, 112 have responded to survey while the remaining 8, 10 and 30 participated as key informant and in-depth interviewees, and focus group discussants respectively. More specifically, 60 and 52 of the respondents were selected using simple random sampling from Giraram and Yenebirna kebeles respectively. The analysis of each objective of the study was discussed under separate sub-topics.

Based on the consent of research participants, qualitative data were also collected through both audio and video recording as well as having field notes without any recording. Accordingly, a total of five FGDs were also conducted to elicit information pertinent to the objectives of the study by employing purposive sampling. While two FGDs were conducted with early married girls (6) and boys (6) in Yenabrna School; one FGD was conducted only with early married boys (6) in Giraram; the fourth and fifth FGD with parents of early married boys and girls and those who were themselves married before the age of 18, each consisting of six participants in both kebeles.

In addition, a total of 10 purposively recruited key informant interviews were also conducted with three, two and one informants respectively from respected elderly, cluster level association representatives and police officers in each kebele. Though it was planned to conduct key informant interview with school principals, they were exempted because of their participation in FGDs.

While interviews with police officers were, video recorded, many FGDs were audio recorded depending on the consent of discussants and interviewees and availability of battery for recording devices used by the researchers during data collection. The research used triangulation where data collected through survey, interviews and FGDs were used to complement one another. Accordingly, the following results were obtained.

3.2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Before analyzing the key findings obtained pertinent to the objectives of this study, an attempt was made to describe background information of the respondents. Accordingly, this sub-section discussed sex and age categories; religious affiliation, educational levels, the number of the respondents' children and their number of years of residence in the study areas.

3.2.1. Sex and age Categories, and Educational Levels of the Respondents

As indicated in the table below (table 1), significant majority of the respondents are males (85.7%) while female respondents constitute 14.3%. Age wise, too, respondents in the age categories of 25 to 59 constitute a significant majority (84.8%) while the remaining 1.8% and 13.4% are found in the age categories of 18-24 and 60 and above respectively.

	Sex	Frequency	Percent
	Female	16	14.3
	Male	96	85.7
	Total	112	100.0
Age category of Respondents			
	18-24	2	1.8
	25-59	95	84.8
	60 and above	15	13.4
	Total	112	100.0

Table 1: Sex and age categories of the Respondents

With respect to religious affiliations of the respondents, it was found that while 99.1% were followers of Orthodox Christianity, the rest 0.9% was found to be follower of protestant religion. That is, except one, all the respondents of this study were followers of Orthodox Christianity.

As one element of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, data were also collected from respondents on their levels of education. As indicated in the table 4.2 below, while 3.6% of the surveyed respondents made no response pertaining to their educational statuses, a significant majority (67%) of the respondents have no formal education; 16.1% of them only completed from grade 1-4; 8% completed from grade 5-8; 0.9% completed from grade 9-12 and the remaining 4.5% hold either certificate, diploma or degree.

	Frequency	Percent
No response	4	3.6
No formal education	75	67.0
grade 1-4 complete	18	16.1
Grade 5-8 complete	9	8.0
Grade 9-12 complete	1	.9
Certificate, diploma or degree	5	4.5
Total	112	100.0

Table 2: Educational Levels of the Respondents

3.3. Definition of Early Marriage

To the open-ended questions posed to respondents to examine how participants of this study understand and define early marriage, it is learned that a number of variations were observed in understanding and defining early marriage. They are, however, important in a number of ways as they provide varied insights where the local people attempt to explain. The following is a summary of thematically organized definition of early marriage as perceived by the research participants.

Definition of early marriage by respondents	Frequency
Bad culture transferred over generations because of illiteracy and as explanation for social obligation (reciprocity) and lack of knowledge in spite of darkening future aspirations of children	10
Marrying any child below the age of 18 and without the knowledge of what they do to refrain from being insulted.	44
Marrying any child below his/her puberty	38
Practice which imposes physical and psychological problems on children	10
Harmful practice people prefer to live in compliance with the community	3
Crime of child abuse	1
Total	107

Table 3: Respondents Definition of early marriage

3.4. Causes of Early Marriage

Understanding the cause of any problem is said to be half way to solve the problem. Similarly, in this study, an attempt was made to examine all of its possible causes by employing a variety of methods of data collection and diverse group of research participants (see sub-sections under section 2.2).

In the study kebeles, it is found that marrying many children at a time is normative practice for all families. Some of the key informants indicated this stating, "Early marriage in our society has been considered for a long period as a national proud". In addition to this, there are many instances where all participants of this study have described the causes of early marriage. Though the study found that the causes of early marriage is rooted in only loosely demarcated social fabrics of life, for the purpose of simplicity, discussion was made by classifying them into socio-cultural and economic reasons.

3.4.1. Economic Causes for Early Marriage

In fact, it is difficult to have a clear-cut demarcation between socio-cultural causes and economic cause of early marriage. As a result, this study found that most of them are overlapping, usually one cause being explained/ followed in terms of another. Yet, in an attempt to discern economic causes of early marriage, the following results were discovered (Table 4).

Though seven of the respondents refrained from offering economic causes of early marriage, all the rest of the respondents have contributed their part. In general, obtaining dowry and lemat/akolkuay¹, as well as reducing the cost of arranging marriage at different times are at the center of economic reasons for early marriage. It is found that the difference among the respondents, focus group discussants and interviewees is related to their foci of attention to either of these causes. Accordingly, majority (58%) of the respondents have indicated a cultural reason -maintaining age old culture of early marriage- which encapsulates many of the economic reasons they forwarded.

¹Lemat/akolkuay is a local term used to refer to supporting someone (close friend or relative) by preparing feasts in periods that demand higher expense (such as marriage, student graduation etc)

Economic rationales for early marriage	Frequency	Percent
to get dowry	1	.9
to collect lemat/akolkuay	22	19.6
to respect long lived culture of early marriage	65	58.0
to get dowry, to collect lamate/akolikuay& to respect long lived culture of early marriage	6	5.4
to collect lamate/akolikuay& to respect long lived culture of early marriage	8	7.1
to get dowry and to respect culture	4	3.6
Total	106	94.64

Table 4: Economic reasons for early marriage

As indicated in Table 4 above, this is followed by 19.6%, 7.1%, 5.4%, 3.6% and 0.9% of the respondents who respectively suggested only lemat collection; to get dowry, to collect lamate/akolikuay& to respect long lived culture of early marriage; lemat collection and maintaining age old culture of early marriage; obtaining dowry and maintaining culture; and to obtain dowry as the major economic reasons of early marriage in their respective kebeles. With slight variation, data collected from qualitative methods have also indicated a number of economic reasons contributing for early marriage. The major ones were mentioned as follows:

- To forage marriage alliance with those in power.
- To strengthen ties between the marriages families for social as well as economic protection and security.
- Well-to-do parents desire to gain fame by sponsoring an elaborative wedding feast as a demonstration of wealth and respect.
- Impoverished parents desire to avoid the expense of preparing wedding feasts for each of their children.
- To prepare feasts in order to invite those who invited them.
- To get back one's material or financial contribution in another's wedding feast.
- Rational choice theories indicate that actors are rational beings who calculate cost benefit analysis in taking different actions. The study found that in Yenebirna and Garamkebeles, resident families make the most effective rational economic calculations to marry their children. Their economic rationale is that all parents decide to marry many children at a time when one of their children is expected to have reached puberty. Virtually all of the research participants have explained this as follows:
We are not only economically poor but also have many children. We want to marry all of our children at once because it is the culture we were grown up on the one side, and we do not have adequate economy to prepare marriage ceremony upon the reach of each child to puberty on the other hand. To solve the problem, if one of our child is physically "matured", we are forced to marry all the rest of our children, whatever their number is, with the oldest son/daughter. This is to reduce the expense that can be incurred if we marry every child separately.

In addition to the above rationale, many parents view as they have developed more economical ways of marriage practices than their forefathers who have been marrying each child separately incurring huge costs. Furthermore, related reasons such as the need to return "lemat", to reduce expenditure of wedding many children at different time.

3.4.2. Socio-Cultural Causes for Early Marriage

To understand socio-cultural causes of early marriage, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. As important as the economic reasons of early marriage are the socio-cultural reasons held by parents, the residents and early married boys and girls. From in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and case histories, made during the study, it is plausible to suggest that communities in Yenebirna and Garamkebeles have developed deep mental structures that led them to believe in and normalize early marriage as a fact of life. Their mental structures are frequently reflected in the thoughts of parents, grandparents, and the general public.

As a result, parents of children always influence one another to make binding relationships through their children; they also fear public blame for not marrying while going to others marriage ceremonies. They have also strong feeling of responsibility to marry their children ahead of being retired or died. They also stated that human beings are always encircled by multiplicity of problems which cannot be escaped by simply avoiding child marriage.

Parents have also a belief that, through marriage, they can create strong relationship with those who can exert strong social and economic influence on the communities in general. Many have also reasoned that marriage provides an outlet whereby relatives from different places come in contact to play family affairs. There are also interviewees and focus group discussants who mentioned that early marriage has been practiced to create strong relation with those who have land resource. There are also useless competitions reflecting the feeling of being proud. These all are reflections of lack of awareness & poor perspective which are brainchild of being illiterate.

Data collected from focus group discussions and interviews also reflect much similarity with survey results on socio-cultural causes of early marriage. It is also observed that socio-cultural causes of early marriage in both the study areas, almost in all cases, are similar. According to many of focus group discussants and interviewees, the following were identified as the major causes of early marriage in both kebeles.

- Respect for the words of the marrying families and the elders who negotiate the marriage alliance between the marrying families.
- Need for social and cultural entertainment through wedding feasts.
- High social respect to gain to parents who have married children
- Limited awareness about the dangers of early marriage
- Limited awareness and limited effective enforcement of the current legislation against early marriage

- parent's failure to consult their children for marriage and marrying children's limited room and failure to have a say on their life choices
- Parents' desire to see their children married and settle the cultural stigma before passing away or becoming old.
- To protect from bad rumors & sayings
- Shame to participate in others wedding ceremonies without marrying one's own
- To see child marriage before death all families and their relatives
- Keep family honor
- Relatives and neighbors influence.

In addition to the above findings from qualitative data, quantitative data collected on the causes of early marriage through open-ended questionnaire were also discussed as follows. Accordingly, except 3(2.7%) of respondents who did not provide answers for the questions related to socio-cultural reasons of early marriage, an attempt was made to categorize all the responses of respondents into six broad themes.

Reasons for early marriage	Frequency	Percent
To gain public prestige	17	15.2
To have a lasting relation with better families	5	4.5
To avoid public nicknaming (kumoker) associated with having not married	69	61.6
To gain public prestige and to have lasting relations with better families	10	9
To gain public prestige & to avoid public nicknaming /kumoker	3	2.7
To gain public prestige, to have a lasting relation with better family & to avoid public nicknaming (kumoker)	5	4.5
Total	109	97.3

Table 5: Socio-cultural factors for early marriage

3.4.3. Faults in the Screening Process

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has been working to solve many of harmful traditional practices including early marriage. With respect to marriage, it is officially made known that no one should marry boys and girls before the age of 18. To this effect, different structures were created to legalize marriage and illegalize early marriage. In the case of this study, it is found, for example, that anyone who wants to marry his/her child must first take him/her/they to the kebele administrator for first level screening. Then, he/she, with his/her son(s) or daughter(s), should go to health center (previously Debremarkos hospital) for second level screening. If a son(s) and/or a daughter (s) pass all these screening steps, he/she/they will be legible for marriage. Since age is the only variable to be screened in this process, it can be designated as age screening process.

In addition to discovering these steps, this study, as it employed different techniques of data collection, also discovered steps which are not immune to illegitimate screening. While parents and kebele level concerned, bodies suggested the existence of due care and concern in the screening process, married focus group discussant students revealed a number of challenges in which their parents marry them ahead of age 18. In the first place, though there is theoretical understanding that early marriage has its own ill effects, upon their going in each screening steps, children have no say. Many focus group discussants have said this

We go to the screening places (kebele or health centers) with our parent (only father) who tells them about our age though we stand in front of the evaluator (s).” Almost all discussants confirmed that their age is wrongly told by their respective father to the concerned bodies; they as children cannot try to falsify their father's sayings for one thing, doing so is considered as impertinence; creates challenges for living with parents for another. Consequently, children are in critical situation where they do not have any chance to say on their matters related to early marriage irrespective of their interests.

Furthermore, some of the children have also blamed kebele police officers and other concerned government bodies who come to wedding feasts even if they know marriage of minors. Indeed, weak age assessment and abusing of community representatives and brides' parents.

3.4.4. Weak Coordination among Different Stakeholders to Deal with the Problem

Let alone problems such as early marriage which are rooted in the culture and value systems of the communities, problems having no socio-cultural roots require concerted efforts to be dealt with. Despite this fact, it is found that no visible coordination exists among different governmental and non-governmental organizations. Nor has the problem of early marriage been dealt with a specific government organ responsible for it. Social institutions such as the school, religious institutions, and iddir and community representatives should have been actively involved to deal with it.

3.5. Trends of Early Marriage

Since there are no data on prevalence and trends of early marriage in the specific study kebeles, an attempt was made to collect it using snowball sampling of households who conducted early marriage in 2014 and 2015. Accordingly, data were collected by appointing responsible individuals recruited from each kebele from school teachers, officers from youth, children and women's affairs, police officers, and briefed in search conference. The collected data shows an increased trend of begging in 2015 than 2014 as shown below in the table (a detailed summary is indicated in section 3.6.2).

S.n.	The number of early married boys and girls in			
	Giraram		Yenebirna	
	2014	2015	2014	2015
	35	78	87	41
Total	113		128	

Table 6: Trends of early marriage for the studied kebeles

3.6. The Situations and Impacts of Early Married Girls and Boys

This section attempts to discern the social, economic and health situations and impacts of those who married while they are minors. The result shows that though all the participants of this study indicated the existence of negative impacts of early marriage, they differ in their presentation of them as socio-economic and cultural impacts. Results of FGDs, and key informant and in-depth interviews revealed that research participants do not view early marriage in the same way. While some of the research participants view it as having only negative impact and some view it only from its positive impacts, significant others have replied it to have a combination of both negative and positive impacts. Their varied explanations were presented as follows.

3.6.1. Socio-economic Situations

In regards to their social situations, the study found that early married boys and girls in the study areas are gossiped, whispered and laughed at by their school mates. This disorients their attention from academics. A director of Giraram primary school has also highlighted increasingly low attention and higher rates of drop out of students after being married.

Economically, too, while there are situations where parents of the bridegroom and bride price offer them with economic assets (such as money, cattle, camel or a combination of these and many others) as startup capital in other societies, this is not the case in the study communities. For one thing, the marrying couples are minors who do not think of themselves, as well as thought by others, in appropriate overall maturity to take responsibility to lead an independent life. Early marriage, for another thing, is established to answer two trivial questions- to reduce/avoid gossip for not marrying and cultural reasons-at the expense of children's rights, wants and aspirations. Furthermore, it is the culture of the society to remarry their children after they grow up since almost all early marriages end up with divorce. Relatedly, there are a number of consequences of early marriage which cannot be exclusively classified as economic, social and cultural one. As a result, an attempt was made to classify them into positive and negative impacts as follows.

- Negative impacts of early marriage

Both negative and positive impacts of early marriage are rooted in socio-cultural and economic realities which cannot be easily separable. Those who described early marriage from negative side suggest the following points:

- Extravagancy with serious negative impacts on Economy
- Feelings of lower status
- Possibility of higher expense as they are married twice
- Lack of respect, insult by the members of the community
- Setback for education; exposes for different diseases

3.6.2. Impacts on Education

In addition to its socio-economic impacts, early marriage has serious impacts on education. Survey data collected to know the trend of early marriage for the year 2014 (2006 E.C.) and 2015(2007 E.C.) and school dropout rates shown in table 4.9 indicates that Yenebrna kebele has relatively higher number of early married children (Yekulea=68 & yenebrna=60) as compared to Giraram (Giraram=58 & Menkiro=55). The table also shows that school dropout rate for the year 2006 E.C. is 18.03% while it is 20.17 for the year 2007 E.C.

3.6.3. Impacts on Education

Kebele	Giraram				Yenebrna				Total number of early married cases in both Kebeles	Percentage of school dropouts for both kebeles
	Giraram		Menkiro		Yekulae/Yegobena		Yenebrna			
Got	The number of early married cases	school dropouts as a result of early marriage	The number of early married cases	school dropouts as a result of early marriage	The number of early married cases	school dropouts as a result of early marriage	The number of early married cases	school dropouts as a result of early marriage		
2006 E.C.	18	5	17	4	33	13	54	-	122	18.03
2007 E.C.	40	3	38	11	35	10	6	-	119	20.17
Total	58	8	55	15	68	23	60		241	38.2

Table 10: Early marriage cases and the percentage of school dropout as a result of early marriage in 2006 E.C & 2007 E.C

Data collected from focus group discussion with students and interview with school directors revealed a number of psychological, developmental and moral consequences early married children face.

3.6.4. Health Situations

Early marriage has also a number of health impacts. In fact, most of its health impacts are not physical and visible to a large extent. They live within the minds and heart of early married boys and girls creating fear, poor confidence, and lack of attention. To triangulate the above data, case an attempt was made to collect data using case history. However, the researchers' tiresome attempts to obtain case histories of early married children was only partially successful because only one of the students was able to bring her case history into the researchers' attention. This was since early married girls.

3.7. Prospects of Early Marriage

Because of the stringent socio-cultural practices of the studied communities, and a number of manifestations of early marriage, majority of early married boys and girls have taken the practice for granted to date. Yet, they have strong motive to avoid it if opportunities interface with their practical realities.

3.8. Discussions

As discussed throughout this paper up to this point, it is possible to deduce that unless regular, planned and concerted action is taken, it is less likely to solve the problem of early marriage in the study kebeles. This is partly because

- ✓ As it can be noticed from trends of early marriage (section 4.5), early marriage seems to have increases rather than showing a decreasing trend.
- ✓ Despite plenty of trainings and awareness creation search conferences and forums meant to aware all at different levels, this never helped anyone to materialize in practical terms.
- ✓ Even those who have strong sense to refrain from marrying their children at early age are highly influenced by their culture, peers, close relatives and those who want to have relationships through marriage. As a result, they have no hope to escape from the existing realities to new ones.
- ✓ Currently, it is not only those with lower education and anti-early marriage training but also those with better education, better anti-early marriage training, and serving in one of local government responsibilities also marry their children at their early ages let alone advising others.
- ✓ Legal awareness program at woreda/kebele levels in most cases involved only administrative officers, local leaders, and religious leaders (in some cases). There is a need of empowering parents to refute early marriage for their children as well as to value education at the local level.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

Based on the data obtained from survey, focus group discussions, and in-depth and key informant interviews, researchers have suggested the following action strategies to be implemented in order to solve the problem of early marriage in Yenebirna and Giraram kebeles.

Challenging the practice of early marriage by:

1. Addressing the conduction of regular discussion forums with children, youth, elderly and parents to create optimal awareness on current national laws and policies on the subject in both kebeles.
2. Changing the attitudes of the local social structure's "gate-keepers", police officers, leaders of iddir, health extension workers, teachers & religious leaders".
3. Developing locally binding rules against the practice of early marriage.
4. Organizing broad and continuous "community awareness raising programs" or "discussion forms" on the dangers of early marriage in socially acceptable ways.
5. Convincing the local people to postponing their marriages based on positive role models and evidence-based advocacy work:
6. Organizing CBOs representatives/ "yegobez alake"/, got & religious leaders at grassroot level to facilitate the implementation of bylaw developed by the community
7. Take concerted action to implement early marriage by religious leaders, Iddir chairmen and justice:

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were proposed.

- ❖ Measuring the extent in which age screening process has become impersonalized
- ❖ Ensuring adequate frequency and quality of awareness raising discussions with all the concerned bodies (children, youth, parents, and religious leaders, leaders of Iddir, school teachers, cluster level associations and self-help groups in both kebeles).
- ❖ Instituting the number and types of incentives publicly provided for model residents who did not marry their children before reaching age 18.

- ❖ Systematizing the number of stakeholders and their frequency of involvement in ending early marriage campaign conducted in the kebeles.

5. References

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