



Research Article

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Migrating Men and Left behind Women

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Abstract: This Research article is entitled Migrating Men and Left behind Women; Causes and Consequences: The Case of Bale and East Bale Zones Agro Pastoralist Woredas. The study was focused on the livelihoods of female-headed households (FHHs) in these Zones. The trajectory of Left behind Women of agro pastoralist woredas, their livelihood challenges, and their livelihood strategies for survival were explored and analyzed. Thus, in order to realize the research objective, phenomenological qualitative research approach were employed. In depth interview, focus group discussion, and systematic observation were used as the instrument of data collection. The participants were purposively sampled from the population of female-headed households residing in six (6) agro pastoralist woredas (Madda Walabu, Laga Hidha, Sewena, Barbare, Ginidhir and Dallo Manna woredas) of Bale and East Bale zones. In addition to female headed households, key informants from women and children office, court office, local elders and religious leaders of each woredas under the study were contacted and interviewed. The collected data were thematically analyzed. This research finding shown that the main contributory reasons for the steadily increasing of female headed households in the study areas are: divorce, early marriage, second marriage, and drug abuse, poverty, internal displacement and husbands out migration. The finding revealed that, from all causes of female headed household intensification, the issues related to divorce are the most prevalent problems that make the court office, women and children office, local elder and religious leaders busy for appeal and negotiation. This research also highlighted that the major challenges encountering female headed households are: feminization of female headed households, social exclusion, abandonment, and losing control over the property are few of them. Besides, female headed households' dependency burden is higher than that of their male counterparts since livelihood choices are compromised by gender differences.

Keywords: Causes, Consequences, Divorces, Husbands Migration, Left behind Women

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

According to International Labor Organization (ILO), female headed household is a household either where no adult males are present, owing to divorce, separation, migration, non-marriage or widowhood, or where men, although present, do not contribute to the household income (ILO Thesaurus, 2005). The definition adopted by the United Nations defines female heads of households as women who are financially responsible for their families, who are the — key decision makers and household managers, who — manage household economies on behalf of an absent male head, or who — are the main economic contributors (UN, 1995).

The impact of losing a male figure and a breadwinner in various households prompt many households to adopt specific survival strategies to cope with the socio-economic and cultural challenges the female headship face. Absence of male partner in the family has greatly contributed to a staggering income of the female headed households since they do not obtain as anticipated in the informal economy and as a result they become impoverished and live in hunger. Female headed households can have equivalent life to the one of the male headed households if the society does not attach household income to the presence of male partner.

Statement of the Problems

The challenges and the stress associated with new transnational family structure can lead to an increased propensity for both men and women to commit betrayal and increased martial problems. Chant (2007) noted that long spells apart and unpredictable communication can highly stressful, sowing seeds of mistrust and provoking men and women alike to engage in extra martial relationship.

Male out migration create factors that may increase propensity on women left behind to commit unfaithfulness through:

- 1st, the distance propagates seeds of distrust with both men and women more likely to seek new partner as result.
- 2nd, women financial vulnerability increase with male out migration if the migrant husband fail to send money, she will look for another source of financial support, mostly another man.

The increasing visibility of left behind female headed households and problems associated with women and their children claimed attention of many academicians and policy makers all over the world. However, there is a lack of research on the women who are left behind in Ethiopia in general and the study areas in particular. Generally, male out migration to other countries are the common problems in Bale zones. The zones is identified

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as one of the hot spot in the region with high prevalence rate of male out migration and left behind women. This added responsibilities of managing family on female alone. In the absence of male the workload of women is increased, as they have to take over many male specific activities namely keeping of land, looking after parents, and other education of children, financial management, etc. Apart from increased responsibilities, frequent thoughts about the safety of migrant husband and self and the problems associated with isolation, all together create a condition of stress among left behind wives which is the focus of this research.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the Study

The general objective of this study was to identify causes of male out migration and explore challenges encountered by left behind women to lead their families.

The Specific Objectives of the Study

The study would be guided by the following specific objectives.

- To analyze husbands' out migration as factors contribute to the increase of left behind female headed households.
- To identify the challenges faced by left behind female headed households in search of household livelihoods.
- To determine reasons why left behind female headed households are more impoverished and deprived than their counterparts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Description of the Study Sites

Madda walabu, Dallo manna, Barbare, Ginidhir, Sewena and Laga Hidha are among woredas located in Bale and East Bale zones of agro pastoralist woredas. The researchers selected these woredas as their research site because:

- These woredas are among woredas with food insecure woredas in the zones and woredas prone to displacement due to border conflict, and drug abuse due to the production of the green leaf called 'chat' in the area.
- Like other woredas, *Madda Walabu, Dallo manna, Laga Hidha, Ginidhir and Sewena* exhibit more diversified economic strategies including dependence on remittances from long distance migration to as well as more investment in livestock and
- Among needy population, Female Headed Households (FHHs) in these woredas are recognized as vulnerable in social and cultural aspects, and use of productive resources.

Design of the Study

The research is qualitative research for it designed to study the social reaction and understanding on causes of male out migration and challenges on left behind women.

The research is aimed at exploring the real life situation of left behind women of the study areas. Such method permits left behind women to express their experiences fully in their own words and to develop in-depth relationships with study participants. It also used to document what actually happens by discussing taboo behaviors in natural settings.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique used in this research was non-probability sampling. Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Punch, 2013).

Purposive sampling targeting to left behind women in both Bale Zones of Agro pastoralist woredas (*Gindhir, Sewena, Laga Hidha, Madda Walabu, Dallo Manna and Barbare*) was employed.

The recruitment criteria were subject to meeting the criteria of inclusion: participants should be at least 18 years old, reside in agro pastoralist woredas, left behind women due to husband migration or due to divorce. However, due to the qualitative nature of the topic, it is difficult to frame all the left behind women in the study areas and also no need of listing and bounding the units from which the sample is to be derived in the study which employs qualitative method. Therefore, the researchers were continued in selecting the number of participants purposively until the needed data was reached saturation point, a point at which the required data from the participants virtually become similar.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Semi structured Interview

From the existing types of interviews, the researchers were employed semi structured interview, where there are few questions that are open ended by nature prepared and contextually used in the field for the research purpose. For the purpose of collecting data through this method, the researchers were conducted interview session with left behind women due to husband migration and divorced female head household from different social groups.

Focus Group Discussions

In this study, two separate focus group discussions (one FGD with divorced women and others with left behind women due to husbands out migration were carried out in each woredas under the study using women headed household who were not be participated in the in depth interview. Each FGD was comprised eight (8) participants. Hence, there were the total of twelve (12) FGDs in six woredas with ninety six ($8 \times 12 = 96$) participants. The FGDs were emphasized on, the social and economic consequences of divorce and husband

migration on left behind women and how the left behind women mitigate the problems.

Method of Data Analysis

After collecting the necessary data, the researchers were categorized, combined, synthesized and there by analyzed the collected data. Before the actual analysis of the data, the collected data was sorted and categorized in accordance to its source and type. Above all, the whole collected data was analyzed thematically in organized way by pursuing to the original descriptions of the field notes so as to infer meanings and generalizations. These themes were discussed in respect of literature review and the research finding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the views and outlooks of the study participants on the causes for the intensification of female headed household and challenges facing female headed household in Bale zones pastoralist woredas.

Factors That Contribute For Intensification of Female Headed Households in Bale Zones Pastoralist Woredas

The FGDs and interview participants of the study listed many factors for the intensification of female head households in Bale zones pastoralist woredas. All most all participants ensured: poverty, polygamy, early marriage, drug abuse, internal displacement due to conflict, suspicion, and peer pressure of divorced women on non-divorced women and death and separation, rural to urban migration, and the children under the legal age making decision of marriage without the consent of both families are the major factors accelerating FHHs in Bale zones agro pastoralist woredas.

Second Marriage as the Causes of FHHs in Bale Zones Agro Pastoralist Woredas

Participants of Barbare district narrated her causes of being FHHs as follows:

In my religion, a man is allowed to have more than one wife. However, that's only possible if he can provide for them. My ex-husband was not meeting his obligations. The household was deprived of many basic needs and I was going through so much emotional and physical pain. It is not easy having co-wives threatening me all the time, chatting about you. I wanted peace of mind and I chose to leave Ginidhir where my husband and I were staying. I now live in Barbare with my children and it is not any easy to meet the needs of children alone both as father and mother.

This study revealed that that polygamy produces conflicts among women who are co-wives and some women tend to choose single motherhood instead of staying in polygamous marriages. In addition, some women said their husbands were not fully providing for their households and they opted for single motherhood as heads of their won households. However, almost all female headed house hold participants of this study are

not happy with leading the families as the father and the mother alone.

The participant unveiled that there are many men who married two / more than two wives without informing the previous wives. *Madda walabu women and children office head strictly condemned this act by saying: dhiironni heddu durbartii lama fuudhan; takka baadiyatti horii jalatti galehan; taan immoo waliin magaalaa jiraatu. Kun rakkoo hamaa amma nu mudachaa jiruudha. Kun akka dubartiin jaarsaan adda baatee dhiirsa malee ijoollee waliin rakkattu gochuu keesatti qooda ol 'aanaa qaba.* (There are husbands who have two wives and put one in rural areas to look after cattle and live with latter married wives in the town (Dallo Manna Women and Children office,2021). The research also come up with the finding that giving birth to a baby boy is raised as a means of warranting the marriage and giving female only the cause of second polygamy or divorce such marriage. The experience of both men and women interviewees shows that if wives consecutively give birth to baby girls, some husbands may want to try another marriage. But if the wife gives birth to boys consecutively there will be no negative reaction; rather there will be a sense of joy. Regarding the prevalence of such difference, one male head interviewee said, "we love both the female and male children, but we know that the female will be dependent on the property of her husband whereas the male stays all the time close to his parents, he even brings a supporter (the wife) through marriage.

Dallo manna women and children office bureau heads listed many problems FHHs are facing in their woredas. Some of the problems identified the Bureaus:

- Majority of people in this woredas are pastoralist and it is very difficult for women to move from one place to another place together with their cattle during the winter season in search of water and pasture.
- Moving from one place to another place in search for pasture and water are very difficult for FHHs especially for those have children.

The local elders of Dallo Manna district narrated the history of the man who had married six wives by saying: now he is 56 years old. He married six women consecutively. While he marries the new wives, he divorces the former one. Accordingly, he reached six and named the six one *xumuree* in Afaan Oromoo (meaning, the end).

Poverty as the Causes for FHHs in Bale Zone Pastoralist Woredas

Many of the discussants of highlighted some men marry women without assessing his potential of leading his life and adds another burdens on his shoulders as head of households. But after he got marriage he is unable to provide what is expected from him as head of the family

and choose divorce as the only viable option of escaping poverty.

Most women interviewed claimed that they were single mothers not by choice but due to circumstances (*nuti akka abbaa manaa fi haadha manaa taanee kan tajaajilaa jirru jaalannee miti haala jireenyaatu nu dirqisiise*). We are female headed house hold not by chances rather it is the life condition that enforced to be female headed (*Laga Hidha district divorced women, 2021*). They quoted poverty and economic disparities as factors contributing to the emergence of female headship. This research found out that, the reasons for husband out migration is to escape poverty and improvements of family economic conditions. Unemployment, search for better income, advice from friends living abroad and the need to offer families with survival incomes are few of them. However, adversely many of the migrated men lost their life on the way of migration, while others are in the concentration camps of the host state because they are illegal migrates. This created fertile ground for the enhancement of FHHs and suspicion within the marriage of (husband and wife) since they were not together for many years.

Divorce As the Causes for the Female Headed House Hold Intensification in Bale Zone Agro Pastoralist Woredas

Divorce can be initiated for different reasons and both parties have the right to initiate it. However, an interesting fact that has been seen in this research is, despite the right to initiate a divorced, female is facing many problems and forced to pay fine or repay the *Nika'a*. As understood from the field work such practice arises from the deep - rooted misunderstanding among the society that once the female got married she has to live according to the will of the husband, even if his will is against the right of the wife;. Whereas if the man wants to initiate the divorce he can do it any time without prior notice. The interview made with both male and female key informants, insight us that as a practice of divorce is not encouraged in the society and it is religiously and culturally the last option but once it is committed the divorced woman becomes liable and susceptible to further problems. According to some participants of this study, a wife is considered as a property of her husband and is vulnerable to customary rules. A woman who gets divorced can marry again, but if she has no property and is not young it is very challenging for her to get a second husband. Reflecting on this point, male household heads agreed that if the new wife is not young, she cannot be easily manipulated by the husband. Explaining this idea one male interviewee said *yoo waan ani barbaadu hin raawwattu ta'e ykn yoo naaf hin dhalle maaliif ishii fuudheree* (*If my wife cannot give birth to a baby or is not active to handle household and farm activities, why should I marry her*).

The interview made with local elders, religious leaders with government workers of women and children office,

court office of woredas under studies, the major Causes of divorce identified in agro pastoralist woredas of Bale zones agro pastoralist woredas are: Drug abuse; Second marriage (*fuudha fuudharratti*); Infidelity-trying to find another sexual relationship; Early marriage/ marriage without enough maturation; poverty; family interference; Pre-planned marriage to share the resource of the husband vice versa if he/she is wealth man/woman and divorce the marriage soon; Jealousy from both side (*hinaaffaa in Afaan Oromoo*);

Early Marriage as the Cause for the Increase of FHHs
Marriage is an important institution in Oromo nation. The Oromo Ethnography about the Gada system tells us how marriage is an important requirement for both men and women. In the Gada system, unmarried men are not allowed to become full members of the Gada jila. Men attain their full status only after marriage (Dejene, 2009).

Early marriage is seen to be pervasive in Bale zones pastoralist. Girls are being forced into marriages at young ages to settle economic and political debts primarily created by male family members; wealthy and powerful men are believed to be taking advantage of these contexts and obtaining young girls for their wives. Although the interviewees of this study indicated that the practice disproportionately affects the poor, illiterate and rural inhabitant girls forced into marriage.

Drug Abuse as the Cause for the Increase of Female Headed Household

It is the modern marriage systems that facilitate FHHs or it is the western cultures and values that eroded our indigenous culture of gender roles. Gadaa system has a considerable place for women, elders, children and human being in general and, even for non-human elements of our environment such as plants and animals, but nowadays what culturally prohibited are becoming the norms and values of the society, while eroding the original ones. Today, in relation to the so-called civilization, especially in urban areas, there are insertion of uncultured practices (*faan-baatee*) on the native cultures and values. Some of these are: Youngsters' alcoholism -intoxication and chewing of chat, female harassment, prostitution - marketing, adultery, verbal abuse, theft, murder, and fabrication of false story including by, who are said to be politicians, elders and religious persons (Gutema and Sultan, 2020). The interview session held with Madda Walabu Court Office deputy president, the cases most repeatedly brought to their office are:

- Divorce
- Land ownership cases
- Drug abuse related cases

Strictly speaking drug abuse particularly chewing chat is the dominant and deep rooted in the values of the pastoralist society of Bale zones. In surrounding villages of the Bale zones the youths are more prime to 'chat' addiction that they adopted through urban interaction.

Thus, they invest their money on those alcohols and chat using the dominance they have in the society without the consultation of the family. This creates fertile ground for the perpetuation of feminization of poverty in general and FHHs in particular.

Dallo Manna religious leaders narrate the cause of the intensification FFHs in their localities as follows: *women who live in pastoralist and agro pastoralist areas are pre occupied with multiple and interlocked problems. In pastoralist woredas here, women are not only looking after children but rather participate in other activities like cattle herding and there are many Dejure female headed house hold because husbands lost their role due to drug abuse particularly chewing chat, are highly observed as the fundamental causes of divorce* and raised the following important points for the causes of FHHs

- *Dhiirsa akka feetee/ kan osoo biyya jiruu akka waan biyya hin jirreetti jiraatu (extremely careless husband, Dejure female headed household).*
- *Dhiirsa yeroo dalagaa achii badu (a husband who leaves the home and the area during the productive collection season) and, Kan yeroo midhaan dhahamu deebi' ee gurguratee badu (come after the product were collected and sold the collected product and leaves the area again).*
- *Abbaa warraa kan caatii qaamuu qofa irratti yeroo fi qabenna fixu (a husband who lost his time and resource on chewing chat).*

The local elders of Dallo Manna district added that migration of husbands, death of husbands, divorce and extremely careless of the husbands are visible in their locality but if it to be seen in percentage and magnitude, divorce is very high and there is low probability of the divorced women to be remarried in their culture. Widowed women have rare chance to remarried, even if remarried she served as the servant who lives always ashamed (*Gursummeettii*).

Husband out Migration as the Causes for the Intensification of Female Headed House Hold in Bale Zones Agro Pastoralist Woredas

It is fact when the husbands migrate overseas; women shoulder more responsibilities and perform the management of finances and household tasks that were traditionally performed by men. By putting this assumption into consideration, the participants of this research where interviewed 'does your husband migration transform your family life? Majority of the participants said no. But some of them said yes.

The finding of this research disclose that when we look at in terms of mobility, some women tend to be mobile, that is, they want freedom of mobility and some are not. Husband's absence forces them to be mobile. When they are together, with their husbands she did not go anywhere because he bring all what she need at home and she considered as house wife. Now husbands are not around

and wives are to go for market and even might engaged in conditions that create fertile ground for the breakdown of marriage. It is clear that male outmigration has brought about a transformation in both social conditions and social attitudes; it has as well added additional tensions to the remained-behind wives. Datta and Mishra (2011) found in their study that for some long stay out of the husbands led to migrants developing extramarital affairs.

In generally speaking, majority of the participants agreed that husband absence affects women lives in many ways (*Durbartiin dhiirsa hin qabne mana utubaa hin qabne; ገለ የሌለልት ሴት፣ ምሥሶ የሌለዉ ቤት* (woman without husband is house without colon). Husband's absence disrupts personal care for dependent family members, including children and the elderly, and a greater burden of responsibility for work and household chores. In this regard, local elders from Madda Walabu and Dallo Manna Districts mentioned the same proverb saying that: *dubartiin gaaleedha; gaaleen mukatti marattu malee jiraachuu hin dandeettu*. Even though this proverb has negative connotation towards women that they are always dependent on men in one side, it has positive implication in another side that the presence of husbands release women from the difficulties that they encountered with when they are alone; because the betterment of women's life need the support of their spouses and vice versa.

Internal Displacement and Conflict as the Cause for the Increase of Female Headed Households

Another major contributor factors to the rapidly increasing of women becoming FHHs in Bale zones pastoralist woredas are internal displacement and conflict. As Participants of Sewena district, a household had said during an interview for this study: *I came from Somali regional state and I settled in Sewena to escape the war of Somali special force of Abdile in 2018 G.C with my two children. My husband was abducted and I don't know still if he is alive or dead. Some of my relatives were also killed; so, I have no option to go back. I got marriage with another man and separated from him again.*

The above case demonstrates that some women migrated, without their husbands but with their children, from war-torn areas such as Jijjiga and district bordered by Somale regional states such as Laga Hidha, Rayitu, Dawe Kachen, madda walabu, and Dallo Manna. The woman later got into other relationships with other men in sewena but still separated and became among single mothers heading their households. Military conflicts and internal displacement have contributed to the separation of families and emergence of FHHs in the Bale zones pastoralist woredas. This study found that conflict on pastoralist areas of Oromia regional states in general and Bale zones pastoralist woredas in particular left some women as Female headed house hold such as widows and

many had their husbands abducted and many other women ended living in the city as a beggar.

Both divorced and husband migrated female headed household reported that, they are; prone to practical gender needs. Practical gender needs are needs identified

to help women in their existing subordinate position in society. The women identify these needs in their socially accepted roles in society. These needs includes: water provision, health care, income earning for household provisioning, housing and services, family food provision.



Figure 1: Women's Vulnerability to Practical Gender Needs at Laga Hidha District (Source: Researchers' Filed Work, 2021).

Problems and Challenges of Female Headed Households (FHHs)

Social Exclusion and Feminization of FHHs

The finding of this research revealed that FHHs experienced feminization of poverty. Many of the participants narrated that as they faced social marginalization; they are discriminated and excluded on the account of their marital status (*ofiin bultuu, al-bula, hiyyeettii, dhibamtuu jaarsa nyaatte (uncontrolled, poor, poisonousness woman, killed her husband)*). The participants added that their inability to offer life sustaining needs for their children has had negative consequences on their children, who exposed to be beggars while others become drug addictive. Many other participants reported that it is very difficult for females who head households to implant any ethical values in their children and many of them engaged in drug abuse like chewing chat, and petty crimes.

This research vivid that households headed by women are viewed as poor (feminized) and the status of the poverty added with their marital status to stigmatize and

labelled the holds. The following quote is taken from woman who was leading her household alone. *Namni baay' een hiyyummaa kiyya sababa an abbaa manaa hin qabneen wal qabsiisa. Ani abbaa manaa malee kan jiraadhu jaaladhee waan filadhee miti filannoo dhabeeti malee (many people associate poverty of my home with the absence of my husband, I became female headed household not by choice, rather I lack other option).*

Losing Control over the Property

Participants who lose their property after the death and separation of their husbands explained that when women left their household it's known that they didn't ask property from their husbands or other family members. And when the men left the households most of them took the property they want. There are cases that after women built a house with husbands in their in-law land and when the husband died or left them, the women couldn't stay in their in-laws house. They leave the house behind without any compensation. Even the separation is held by the legal bodies, the women may not be benefitted

from the decision. The participant of in-depth interview, the mother of two, narrated as below:

My biggest challenge was when I share a property with my first husband. He took all my property, my own house that I own before our marriage and he doesn't to return. Later I went to court and the judge decided to return the house to me but they couldn't handover it; no one can make him leave the place. So he remarries in my own house and starts living with his new family while I am living in a rental house. Even if the court decided the house to her, the concerned body and police didn't handover the property and they were negligent. And her husband was not willing to return her property.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion rendered above, the following conclusions were made.

The research unveiled that the position and status of the divorced female heads and their ex-husband, the rule of the game determined in one way or another is affected by the values that each party has grown up with. For instance, for divorced female heads we have seen that they were abandoned from their marriage because of traditionally accepted conception of marriage. For instance, if the woman failed to give birth to a baby or gives birth to female children consecutively she should accept it as her problem. If the husband wants to establish another marriage he can also grasp her belongings and get married to another woman.

The finding of this study also shows that, petty trade is a strategy that was employed by many female headed house hold in the study areas. For the survival of their Households many of them engaged in trade of charcoal or firewood, potato, milk, tomato. This provides a market for the women who sell charcoal and firewood, contributing to their income.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were forwarded:

- The religious leaders and local elders need to advice, the impact of divorce, separation on the children and continue to maintain a healthy relationship of husbands and wives
- The government office, especially women and children office, non-governmental organization working on gender issues need to conduct public sensitizations, gender awareness, on the causes of divorce, husbands' migration and its associated negative effects on children, divorcees and the community.
- Increase the implementation and use of community projects on agro pastoralist woredas which teaches about the adverse effects of divorce, drug abuse,

gender division of labour, and early marriage on the girl, family and the society as a whole.

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Then, it is obvious that the successfulness of any research might be the fruit of contributions made by numerous institutions or individuals who have the share directly or indirectly in the process of investigation, from the beginning up to the final stage of the study.

Accordingly, the successful completion of this research was the result of invaluable inputs attained from different (either directly or indirectly) concerned bodies.

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