

Gender-based Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities of Women's Access to Resources in West Shewa, Ethiopia

Mengistu Debele Gerbi

Ambo University Email: madegaorman@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Gender is an issue of power relations between men and women. It refers to socially determined roles. In developing countries, especially in deep-rooted patriarchal culture, gender equality is decreasing or remains stagnant and women limited to access and control over resources. Gender-based socio-economic vulnerabilities are among the most common barriers hinder women from having power over resources. The purpose of this study was to describe challenges of women's access and control over resources as a factor of socio-economic vulnerabilities. To this end, qualitative descriptive research design was employed. Three (3) districts (Toke Kutaye, Chaliya, and Ambo) were selected through the convenience sampling method. Seven (7) kebeles from the three districts were selected by purposive sampling. Ninety-nine (99) elders, one hundred ten (110) women, and three (3) government gender office experts, total of 212 participants were participated in the study. Instruments for data collection were an in-depth interview, key informant interview, and FGD. Data were organized thematically and qualitative content and narrative analysis were made. It was found that early marriage, polygamy, gender-based lobar division, and abduction are socio-economic challenges for women to access and control over resources. The findings suggest encouraging policies against harmful traditional practices, discouraging social norms that negatively discriminate against women through offering education on human rights and public awareness creation, and accessing women to free education, free market, start-up projects, and locally available resources.

Keywords: Access, economic, gender, social, vulnerability

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Justification of the Problem

In developing countries including Ethiopia, particularly in deep-rooted patriarchal culture, gender equality is decreasing or remains stagnant (Jeffrey et al., 2024). The patriarchal culture attributes power to men and limits women's access to and control over resources. Gender-based socio-economic vulnerabilities are among the most common factors those barrier women from having power over resources. Women and girls are not free from socio-economic vulnerability in the 21st century. Everywhere in the world women and girls are gendered and vulnerable to socio-economic and physical risks. According to WHO (2021), about one in three women and girls across the globe have experienced physical or sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence or both at least once in their lives. Gender-based vulnerability is even more alarming in less developed regions where poverty is associated with gender-based vulnerability, especially abduction, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, early marriage, unwanted pregnancy, homelessness, and migration (Duvvury, 2009).

The issue of gender equality is an issue of power relations between men and women (UN, 2020; Jeffrey et al., 2024). Gender is a concept that is often misunderstood and misapplied, particularly when it comes to referring to the imbalance between men and women in institutions or gatherings. However, the concept of gender extends far beyond just numbers. According to UNESCO (2015), gender encompasses socially determined roles and relationships between men and women. While it is commonly associated with women's issues, Verloo (2007) argues that gender refers to the broader socio-cultural classification of individuals based on societal norms and values. This classification dictates the roles that men and women should play in society across various dimensions such as controlling resources, leading family, school, religious, government organizations, media, and the wider community (Verloo, 2007). Unfortunately, this classification often disadvantages women by assigning numerous roles and responsibilities. Gender-based social and economic vulnerability are conditions in which human beings are prone to being at risk of harm by socio-cultural stigmatization and economic deprivation because of their gender (Duvvury, 2009). This definition incorporates all forms of abuse, including sexual, physical, emotional, and psychological harm.

The patriarchal culture that attributes power to men limits women's access to and control over resources. The deeply-rooted patriarchal culture widespread in most societies including Ethiopia credits power to men both at home and community level. According to patriarchal social organization, the male is the family head. The family's title, ownership, and kinship are traced through the male line. This culture attributes roles to either sex which is referred to as gender stereotyping. Gender stereotyping, thereby the inequality of opportunities, rights, responsibilities, roles, and access to and control over resources is the result of such socialization (UNFPA, 2023). Gender inequalities impose real costs on the agriculture sector which is composed of the broader economy and society, as well as rural women themselves. Women in agriculture and rural areas have typically less access than men to productive resources, technology, agricultural extension, and rural infrastructure as a result incur higher labor costs than men (WFP, 2011).

Gender-based social and economic vulnerabilities are among the most common factors that hinder women from having power over resources. Social vulnerability can be described as the risk obtained from a combination of socio-cultural, economic, political, and institutional practices that bring socio-economic differences (Spielman et al., 2020). It further refers to the potentially damaging effects on communities caused by external stresses on human health. Such human health problems include maternal health problems such as pregnancy risks can be human-caused problems. On the other hand, the economic vulnerability of women is associated with the feminization of poverty. The majority of the World's poorest are women (Eisenstein, 2015) and this is why women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable to adverse impacts of global changes. Hence, reducing socio-economic vulnerability is a way to decrease both human suffering and economic loss.

The main aim of the Ethiopian National Women's Policy is to institutionalize the political, economic, and social rights of women by establishing an appropriate structure in government offices and institutions. Public policy and intervention at the national level are assumed to be gender-sensitive and they can ensure equitable development for all Ethiopian men and women. However, the policy undermines women in rural areas where about 75% of women and girls are illiterate or less educated. Article 25 of the FDRE constitution forbids any discrimination regarding gender. In addition, Article 35 asserts principles of equality of access to economic

opportunities, including the right to equality in employment and land ownership. Following the Beijing Declaration, the Ethiopian government has made efforts to bridge the gender disparity in development by taking affirmative actions and prioritizing among the twelve critical areas of concern.

In rural areas of Ethiopia, women face challenges in participating in the productive sector of the economy and mobilizing the existing resources. This may worsen the lives of women and that of their families. Thus, this study described the hindering factors of women's access to and control over resources that would improve their quality of life.

Women's responsibilities place them in a unique position to improve social and economic well-being and to improve the lives of the whole family. However, women in many countries do not have equal access to education, health care, employment, land, credit, and technology, social, economic or political power. Failure to provide equal opportunities and equitable support for women to pursue social and economic self-sufficiency has meant that a disproportionate number of women are vulnerable to various risks. These failures, exclusion, low status, and poverty are also barriers to the sustainable development of a country (United Nations, 2009).

In Ethiopia, due to a lack of access to and control over resources and many discriminatory traditional customs, women comprise a majority of those living in absolute poverty. The reason why women disproportionately bear the burden of poverty is mainly the result of the gender-based division of labor and lack of access to and control over resources due to social and economic factors. Rural women are responsible for all the household chores, in addition to child rearing and the support they provide in agriculture and livestock production.

Customary laws in Ethiopia are also in favor of men (Hebo & Shigeta, 2014; Sisay, 2015; Cecchi & Melesse, 2016). The family arbitration system used for solving inter-household quarrels is conducted mainly by elder men who want to maintain the subordinate position of women and this result in the application of gender-biased customary laws. The fact that women in rural areas are often not well-informed of their rights under the law further contributes to their being marginal and being at risk of being victims.

Harmful traditional practices (HTPs) are among social vulnerability to women. HTPs such as early marriage, having many children in wish to boy preference, and supremacy of husband may force women to accept whatever decision that is made by male-headed household (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, 2013; Dessiye, 2012). According to the Ministry of Women's Affairs (2006), 75% of Ethiopian girls marry before the age of 17. Women in Ethiopia have limited power to make decisions on issues related to the daily life of their family, but decisions about large household purchases, the degree of participation of a woman in social activities, and reproductive health issues are dominated by men (Zinash, 2014).

Although rural women's contribution to their households, food production, and national economies is immense, it has not been translated into better access to and control resources or decision-making powers. As a result, women remained to be the poorest of the poor constituting 70% of the global poor (Chant, 2011). Women in Ethiopia face similar constraints. Due to the different roles and responsibilities men and women have in society, the causes and experiences of poverty also differ by gender. Rights such as access to land, credit, and other productive resources are difficult for women, particularly for recently married women. To the extent of knowledge of the current study author, no study focused on the identification of the challenges of getting access to and control over resources considering social and economic vulnerabilities. This study addressed the following research questions.

1. What are gender-based socio-economic vulnerabilities that hinder women's access to and control over available resources?
2. What are the harmful traditional practices (HTPs) that limit women's access to and control over resources?
3. How does lack of access to and control over resources affect the livelihood of women in rural communities?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research approach through a descriptive research design. This design is important to describe the situation under the study very well (Mills & Gay, 2019). This design gives concentrated descriptions of the challenges of women's access to and control over resources. The purpose of the study was to describe challenges that limit women's access to and control over resources in the selected kebeles of the three districts (Ambo, Toke Kutaye, and Chaliya) of West Shewa, Ethiopia. More specifically, the study was conducted to identify socio-economic vulnerability of women not to getting access to and control over available agricultural and common natural resources. It also deals with identifying HTPs that limit women's access to and control over resources and shows how the lack of access to and control over resources affects the livelihood of women in rural communities.

2.2 The Study Sample

Primary data sources were used to gather relevant information. West Shewa Zone and the three districts were purposely selected based on their proximity. From all the existing offices at district level, women and children office of each district was selected purposively as it was believed that they have rich information on the issues of the study.

Three kebeles from Toke Kutaye District and two kebeles from Chaliya Districts were purposely selected based on the agro-ecological differences that they have and the base line information collected from the districts' concerned bodies and based on its convenience for the availability of the participants of the study. Two kebeles were selected from Ambo district since the data obtained from the one kebele was not saturated and with the recommendation of district officers who thought that additional rich information might be obtained.

The community facilitators purposely selected those who showed willingness and who were believed to be representatives of the village in each Kebele and can give rich information. Snow ball sampling technique was used to identify women with special cases that were selected for in-depth interview.

Table 1: Sample participants of the three districts in West Shewa

Districts	Kebeles	No. of FGDs	No. of Participants				Total no. of participants
			Elders	Women	KII	Officials	
Ambo	Senkelle Farisi	4	20	24	1	1	69
	Gosu Kora	2	12	10	1		
Chaliya	Tullu Jaldeesa	2	13	12	1	1	52
	Rafiso Alanga	2	12	11	2		
Toke	Ejeree Arfinjoo	2	11	10	1	1	91
Kutaye	Tokkee Arfinjoo	3	16	17	1		
	Wajiraa	3	15	17	2		
Total	7	18	99	101	9	3	212

2.3 Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through interacting with the participants by using an in-depth interview, key informant interview (KII), field notes and FGD using semi-structured open-ended questions. In-depth interviews were conducted with women who have actual experience with the study problem. Open-ended interview questions were prepared based on the research questions and the objectives of the study. To obtain rich information about the issues under investigation focus group discussion sessions were conducted with women and elders. The detail number of FGDs in each kebele is indicated in Table 1.

Key-informant interview were developed covering a wide range of issues, intending to identify women’s activities in their day to day activities as well as their opportunities and constraints with regard to access and control over resources.

To obtain detailed and relevant information from the participants, the necessary materials for data collection including tape recorder and stationeries were arranged. First, permission was obtained from the concerned districts after giving them letter from Ambo University and discussing with World Vision Ethiopia (WVE) managers to collect the data from the sampled Kebeles. The districts’ concerned bodies informed the Kebele chairpersons through phone and community facilitators (CF) of the Kebeles. Second, before starting the in-depth interview, issues like the appropriateness of the place or location for the interview, the purpose

of the study, the length of interview session, the issues of confidentiality and verbal consent to participate in the study and to tape recording the interview were discussed and agreed upon with the participants. Finally, the data collection process continued on the basis of plan of data collection. The interview environment was decided by the participants and the facilitator of the discussions. The FGDs were conducted in schools in some Kebeles and in offices of kebeles and under trees where there was no disturbance.

2.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Repeated readings through the organized field notes were held to comprehend the content of the data and to develop coding and to make themes from the data by shading similar concept with similar colors. Both the content and context of data were used in analyzing in narrative way to communicate the result. Thus, content analysis and narrative analysis were used. Researchers of current study organized and analyzed the data independently and brought together to discuss the similarities and differences of the analysis made. This helped us to maintain the quality of the data and minimize subjective outlook at what have been reflected by the participants of the study. Besides, research document was given to experienced reviewer who critically read and commented including to reconsider the validity of the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Theme 1: Women's access to and control over resources in the study area

Women in the three districts of West Shewa Zone did not get access to and control over locally available resources. Agricultural resources availability varies from place to place based on ecological location and weather conditions. However, almost all cereal crops are available with various degrees. The data obtained with regard to the available agricultural resources are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of agricultural crops and livestock in the study area

Crops, Fruits, Vegetables and Livestock Resources		
Ambo District	Chaliya district	Toke Kutaye District
Bean, *Maize, *Teff , Wheat, Barley, *Potato , Tomato, onion Beat root, Lettuce, Compact cabbage, Garlic, *Chickpea, Ensete Goat, Cows, sheep, Hen, horse and Donkey	*Onion, Maize, *Red Paper, *Enset Tomato, potato, Fruits and vegetables, goat cows, Sheep, hen , Donkey	*Maize, wheat, *Ensete beans , barley, *teff, *Potato , Tomato fruits and vegetables, Sheep, goat, cows , hen, horse , Donkey, honey bee/hive

Source: FGDs and KII of West Shewa, *the crops mostly cultivated in the district.

Table 2 shows that almost all types of crops are cultivated in the districts. *Teff* is cultivated in all districts with relatively great amount. Women are extensively engaged in land preparation for Teff cropping. However, they are denied by their husbands to get economic benefits from agricultural products they contributed lions share in production. Girls and women devote significant time to unpaid work within the family (Elshaday, Mekuria, & Emil, 2009). Regarding this, Ogato (2007) stated that eight out of ten persons, who engaged in Teff land preparation (*meesu*) in Senkele Farisi kebele, were women.

Traditional hive is very common in Toke Kutaye Districts. Enset plant and vegetables such as red paper and onion are cultivated in some Kebeles of Chaliya and Toke Kutaye Districts. Similarly, potato and tomato are cultivated in all three districts with great amount.

Women are largely engaged in chopping, grating and fermenting the Ensete plant in the districts.

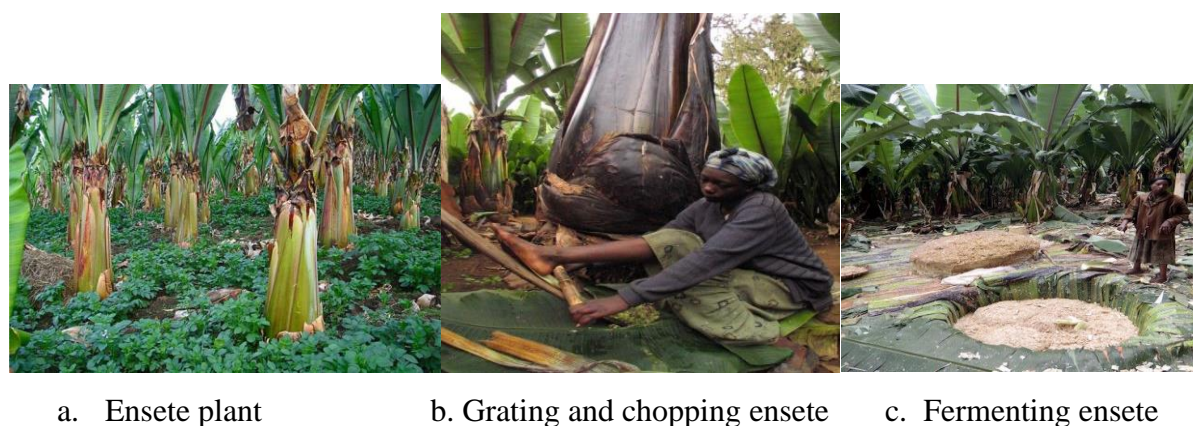


Fig.1: Ensete plant and women engagement in preparation of ensete for food in Toke Arfinjoo Kebele.

Teff is the main crop cultivated in Ambo and Tokey kutaye districts; where maize is the main crop in Chaliya district. This finding is in line with the discussion given by Alemayehu, et al. (2012) which stated that agricultural production patterns vary markedly across Ethiopia according to agro-climatic conditions, in particular, widely varying rainfall and elevation. They added that maize has the largest share of cereal crops cultivated in Ethiopia as also confirmed in this study. With regard to livestock, all kinds are available in the districts except camel. In high land of the districts, sheep are reared in large amount. Hens are reared everywhere while the rest cattle are reared in high land and semi-high land.

Theme 2: Control and management of family's resources in study area

Family's resources are controlled and managed by head of family, i.e. husband. Data obtained from Ambo District Women and Children expert revealed that husbands are the one who control and manage family's resources (both agricultural and livestock products). Despite, improvements on women empowerment in all aspects, still women are dominated by their husbands. This is due to insufficient awareness of women and men about their rights. The husband gives cereals such as wheat, barley, and maize for "Qallaba" literally food for consumption or to feed the family. According to the report by Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2000), one of the major achievements recorded in the economic sphere is the enhanced economic empowerment of women from improvements in access to and control over productive resources like land through certification and property ownership. This gave them an opportunity to get collateral for credit. But the certification of land did not continue for those who engaged in marriage recently.

Theme 3: Women's economic benefit from common/natural resources in study area

Women are not getting economic benefits from common/natural resources. There are common resources in the districts to which women could get access to. These common resources include minerals like Ambo stone, black and red sand used for construction.

Table 3: Available common/natural resources by districts

Ambo District	Chaliya District	Toke Kutaye District
Mountain	Mountain	Sand
Ambo stone	Stone	Stone
Red and black sand	Irrigation	Rivers for irrigation
Nyamaer gold		

As shown in Table 3, the three districts under study have different common resources that do not belong to an individual. However, in none of the study areas women are being benefitted from these resources because of lack of commitment by government in giving awareness regarding equal opportunity to use natural/common recourse.

In discussing question related to the existence of common resources the elders from Senkelle Farisi kebele stated the issue of the red and black sand:

“At kebele level, we have valleys and mountains where sand can be extracted. Some adults [male youths] were organized by Oromia micro business enterprise on this minerals. The kebele together with the enterprise provided the land for only 5 years for them to extract sand and stone and benefitted from these. But, the life span of the project is extended to 8 years for the reason we are unsure. They sell stone, red and black sand and the most expensive Ambo stone. But, it could have been better if the adults are graduated and the turn is given to others including girls” (Ambos District, Senekelle Farisi kebele, Elders FGD).

Most FGD discussants and interviewees held in the study participants revealed that women are encountering different challenges in getting access to market. The major challenges are distance of the market and the expensive cost of transportation. FGD conducted with Women in Chaliya district, Tulluu Jaldeesa kebele confirmed that...

“We were not getting access to market in our locality. We were also not capable of covering the payment of transportation services”.

There is no transportation service like cars even if there is infrastructure like road. This is evident in the Toke Kutaye District, particularly among residents of Toke Arfinjoo, and Ejeree Arfinjoo kebeles.

“There are no transportation services to take our products like potato and Ensete to the market on time.” (Ejeree Arfinjoo and Tokkee Arfinjoo kebele, Women FGD).

Another challenge in getting access to market is existing norms in the community which allowed women to sell and buy small assets like hen, egg and milk products and denied to /not permitted to sell and buy big assets like Oxen, and cows because their husbands have a mandate to control over these resources. Sheep and goat are sold by both wife and husband. In addition, most of the time small amount of *Teff* and milk products is taken to market frequently; it is assumed that the selling of these commodities is not suitable for the males.

From the three types of market (formal, informal and structured public) identified by Ferris, Robbins and Best (2014), the market type available in Ethiopia in general and in the study areas in particular is informal market in which the control of the trading system by local authority is lenient. As a result, the brokers in the markets of the study areas enforce arbitrary stall fees for the products that the rural farmers take to market which is great challenge for the women who engaged in trade and who take their products to market.

With regard to this, FGD held with women at Toke Kutaye District, confirmed that...

“Our husbands most of the time take cattle to market and being challenged and beaten by illegal brokers. As a result, when our husbands go to market we are unhappy until they come back home. This is what almost all of us have been witnessed”. (Wajira Kebele, Women FGD).

Theme 4: Gender-based labor division in study area

Women suffer from social norms that attach overburden works, stereotype, and gender division of labor. The exploitative and customary nature of domestic works is devastating the rights of women in the three districts. In spite of their contributions to the wellbeing of their family and community affairs, women suffer from work stereotype and gender division of labor; they experience lower socio-economic status and engage in economically invisible work. They are supposed to work in home and even outside of home in the agricultural activities but not yet recognized.

Theme 5: Women’s engagement in labor intensive works in the study area

Women and girls are engaged in labor intensive works in three districts under the study. FGD conducted with women in Chaliya District indicated the burden women.

“We engage in activities like: supplying milk products to the nearby market for sell, taking hen, sheep and goat to the market for sell, taking care of our children, collecting fire woods, washing clothes of our family, buying clothes for children, preparing what is to be consumed (Meal, lunch, dinner etc.) by family members. We sleep mostly after all family members have slept”. (Tullu Jaldeesa Kebele, Women FGD).

This engagement of women in labor intensive work limits them from access to information such as listening to radio and participation on meeting; hence they would not get access to information about HIV/AIDS, HTPs and saving and credit.

Theme 6: Harmful traditional practices (HTPs) in study area

Harmful traditional practices put rural women in subordinate position and militate against equal rights. According to FDRE Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA, 2013), HTPs are deep-rooted in the beliefs, values, and norm of the community.

Subtheme 6.1: Early/Child marriage in study area

Early/child marriage is the most HTP affecting the women in the districts. In all FGDs and KIIs, it was stated that early marriage is the most HTP affecting the women. The age at which a girl marries varies from kebele to kebele and even from a village to a village. In general, the age range of early marriage mentioned in FGDs is 13-17 years. The most frequently mentioned age of early marriage is 14 years old. One of the victimized women from early marriage narrated here case as following case:

I’m Bontu (pseudonym) and have the mysterious life of girl who married early at my 14 and now divorced. I have victimized from early marriage that lead me to drop-out my school, and let me to maternal health problem (fistula). I gave early birth at my 15 and my baby was not able to survive. Fortunately I’m lucky for having brothers who treated and sent me back to school. But, other women who divorced were

migrated to the nearby towns like Ambo, Holeta, Shagar City, and also to Arabian countries. The inter-migrated girls engaged in low wage daily labor who carry stone for construction, make pot coffee under veranda, on street and even under tree. They are highly vulnerable for unwanted pregnancy. (In-depth interview at Ambo Town with woman migrated from Gosu Kora kebele).

Subtheme 6.2: Practice of polygamy in study area

Polygamy is rarely practiced in all the three districts.

“Polygamy is practiced in the case when wife is barren or not able to give baby boy. In rare case man marries more than one wife based on his economic capacity of heading family, or for performing cultural rituals”. (FGD, Women from all the kebeles).

Subtheme 6.3: Abduction in study area

The level abduction is reduced in the districts. Even though abduction is greatly reduced, it is still appears when girls turn from primary schools and market place. Abduction both with and without the knowledge of the girl occurs in case when social and economic status of girl’s family not match that boy’s family.

“Yearly 5-10 girls get abducted in rural area schools. For instance, five female students were abducted in 2014 E.C academic year from Barkume Danbi Primary School.”(KII, Ambo District).

Theme 7: Women’s physical and psychological abuse in study area

Women are vulnerable for physical and psychological abuse by their husbands. FGD in the three districts show that some husbands beat their wives and disturb their families. Regarding this:

We are vulnerable to physical abuse both for justified and non-justified beating. It is common to our husbands beat us when we argue with them, when we are not good in cook the food, when we not respect them, when we neglects the children, and when we refuse sex. (FGD, Women from all the kebeles).

3.2 Discussion

Darwin's principle of "the fittest will be survived" states, human being does not sit idle to perish from the world. He/she strives to survive and search mechanisms of survival. The women in the study areas used different mechanisms to survive themselves since they have limited access to and control over resources. Engagement in daily labor, milk processing, poultry, share cropping or share rearing of sheep and engagement in petty trade are some of the copying strategies that women take. Moreover, few of them have been successful in taking loan from Oromia saving and credit corporation and rearing cattle.

The findings of this study reveal that women in rural areas did not exercise rights of economic, social, and gender equalities. They did not access to and control over the resources. This is in contrast to the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1999) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) that Ethiopia has ratified.

One factor for women's socio-economic vulnerability is the supremacy of men over women and violence against women's right. Regarding this, Jeffrey et al. (2024) reported that many developing countries including Ethiopia have low performance on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG #5) which is gender equality. On the other hand, women are not benefited from agricultural and livestock production. Similarly, women are overburdened by domestic works and supporting men in agricultural and livestock productions. This is in line with the analysis made by Ethiopian national women's policy (2013) which states that rural women extensively engaged in agricultural and livestock production which they do not get access to and control over the family resources.

Early marriage and forcing women to give many children in sex preference of boys are some of community factors of gender-based vulnerability of women at rural areas. The finding shows that early marriage is prevalent in the study area with age of 13-17. Regarding this, UNFPA (2023) reported that child marriage by age 18 in Ethiopia is 40%.

Regarding relationship factors, husband has the power to assail or beating his wife and then resolved the dispute by customary law that favors him. Men control over every big social and

economic issues. Regarding to individual levels factors, marital conflict in case when husband is alcoholic, and polygamy in the case when wife is barren or not able to gives baby boys, abduction in case when social and economic status of girl not match that boy family deviated in rural areas.

Early marriage is one of HTPs in the study areas. Many girls face child marriage. According to WHO (2021), 40% of Ethiopian girls marry under 18. Women in the study area are overburden by household chores than access to and control over resources. This finding is in line with findings by Bekana (2020) that stated gender inequality and highly patriarchal structures in Ethiopian society are among the root causes of unmet economic needs and costing Sub-Saharan African economies.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions have drawn. Women in rural areas are vulnerable for social and economic challenges. Women in rural area do not exercise rights of economic, social, and gender equalities. Harmful traditional practices prevalent in the study areas are the great challenges for the women to get access to and control over resources. These practices include heavy workload of the women in household chores and agricultural land preparation are the neck bottle for women in attending media such as listening to radio so that they couldn't get access to information that is expected to have positive impact on their livelihoods.

Early marriage, abduction, having many children in sex preference of boy, and polygyny are harmful traditional practices in the districts. The study underscores the urgent need for interventions that promote gender equality and empower women in rural areas, addressing both social and economic factors contributing to their vulnerability. Efforts should focus on enhancing women's access to and control over resources, supporting their rights, and challenging harmful traditional practices to foster an environment where women can thrive economically and socially. The findings call for polices that enhance women's access and control of resource, by make them access to education, market opportunity, start-up projects, and locally available

resources. By addressing these issues, it is possible to empower women, reduce their vulnerability, and promote gender equity in resource access and control.

REFERENCES

- Alemayehu, S., Paul, D., & Sinafikeh, A. (2012). Crop Production in Ethiopia: Regional Patterns and Trends. *International Food Policy Research Institute*.
- Bekana, D. M. (2020). Policies of gender equality in Ethiopia: the transformative perspective. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 43(4), 312-325.
- Chant, S. H. (Ed.). (2011). *International handbook of Gender and Poverty: Concepts, Research, Policy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Cecchi, F., & Melesse, M. B. (2016). Formal law and customary change: A lab-in-field experiment in Ethiopia. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 125, 67-85.
- Dessiye, B. (2012). *The Impacts of Harmful Traditional Practices on Women's Socio-Economic and Political Activities: The Case of Pastoral Women in Hamer Woreda, South Omo Zone, SNNPRS*. Doctoral dissertation, St. Mary's University.
- Duvvury, N. (2009). *Keeping gender on the agenda: Gender based violence, poverty and development*. Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence.
- Eisenstein, H. (2015). *Feminism seduced: How global elites use women's labor and ideas to exploit the world*. Routledge.
- Elshaday, K., Mekuria, Y., & Emil, P. (2009). *Directory of programs for rural girls in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Population Council.
- Ferris, S., Robbins, P., & Best, R., (2014). *Smallholder Farmers to Markets and the Implications for Extension and Advisory Services*. USAID. MEAS Discussion paper 14.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2000). *National report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Addis Ababa.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA). (2013). *National strategy on Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) against Women and Children in Ethiopia*.
- Jeffrey, D. S., Guillaume, L., & Grayson, F. (2024). *Sustainable Development Report. The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. The SDG Index and Dashboards*.

- Hebo, M., & Shigeta, M. (2014). Continuity and change in the rights of Arsii Oromo women to property in West Arsii, Ethiopia. *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies*, 2014(19), 17-30.
- Mills, G. E. & Gay, L. R. (2019). Educational research. Competencies for analysis and applications. (12th ed.). Hudson Street, New York: Pearson Education Inc.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs. (2006). National Action Plan for Gender Equality. Addis Ababa.
- Ogato, G.S., (2007). The quest for gender equality and women's empowerment in least developed countries: Policy and strategy implications for achieving millennium development goals in Ethiopia.
- Sisay, M. G. (2015). Departure of Ethiopian family laws: The need to redefine the place of societal norms in family matters. *Haramaya Law Review*, 4(1), 81-105.
- Spielman, S.E., Tuccillo, J., & Folch, D.C. (2020). Evaluating social vulnerability indicators: criteria and their application to the Social Vulnerability Index. *Nat Hazards* 100, 417–436.
- UNESCO. (2015). A Guide for Gender Equality in Teacher Education Policy and Practices. France. UNESCO printing press.
- United Nations. (2009). World Survey on the Role of Women in Development Women's Control over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources.
- UNFPA. (2023). 8 Billion Lives, Infinite Possibilities, the case for rights and choices.
- UN. (2020). Gender equality. *Women's rights in review*, 25
- Verloo, M. (2007). Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality. A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe. New York. Central European University Skills.
- WFP. (2011). World Food Program USA Annual Report.
- WHO (World Health Organization), (2021). Violence against women, prevalence estimates.
- Zinash, T. (2014). The extent of economic empowerment of women through Adult Education: the case of Kolfe Keranyo Sub-City. Doctoral dissertation, Addis Ababa University.