

Kidist Getachew Seyoum

# The Role and Significance of Domestic Adoption as a Cultural Practice of Raising Children in Sebeta-Awas District of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia

Master's thesis in MPhil in Childhood Studies  
Supervisor: Ida Marie Lyså, Associate Professor  
May 2023



Kidist Getachew Seyoum

# **The Role and Significance of Domestic Adoption as a Cultural Practice of Raising Children in Sebeta-Awas District of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia**

Master's thesis in MPhil in Childhood Studies  
Supervisor: Ida Marie Lyså, Associate Professor  
May 2023

Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences  
Department of Education and Lifelong Learning





<b>Table of Contents</b>	
<b>Abstract</b> .....	iv
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	v
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	vi
<b>Acronyms</b> .....	vi
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1.2 Research questions</b> .....	2
<b>1.2.1 General research question</b> .....	2
<b>1.2.2 Specific Research question</b> .....	2
<b>2 Problem statement</b> .....	2
<b>3 Personal Motivation</b> .....	3
<b>4 Significance of the Study</b> .....	3
<b>5 Study Area</b> .....	5
<b>6 Chapter Overview</b> .....	6
<b>Chapter 2: Context</b> .....	7
<b>2 Introduction</b> .....	7
<b>2.1 Historical Background of Ethiopia</b> .....	8
<b>2.1.1 Religion, Poverty and Demography in Ethiopia</b> .....	8
<b>2.1.2 Family Dynamics and Gender roles in Ethiopia</b> .....	10
<b>2.1.3 Understanding Households, Extended Families, and Household Migration: An Overview</b> .....	11
<b>2.1.4 Households, Extended Families, and Household Migration</b> .....	12
<b>2.2 Promoting the Rights of Children and Ensuring Safe and Appropriate Care through Legal Adoption Procedures</b> .....	13
<b>2.3 Chapter Summary</b> .....	14
<b>Chapter 3: Theoretical-Frameworks</b> .....	15
<b>3. Introduction</b> .....	15
<b>3.1 Social constructionism Theory</b> .....	15
<b>3.2 Theory of Stigma and Identity</b> .....	17
<b>3.3 Life Transition Theories</b> .....	18
<b>3.4 Chapter summary</b> .....	18
<b>Chapter 4: Methodological Approaches</b> .....	20
<b>4 Introduction</b> .....	20
<b>4.1 Methodological Approach</b> .....	20
<b>4.2 Process on the Field</b> .....	21

4.2.1 The field work site .....	21
4.2.2 Field Entry and Process of Gatekeeping .....	21
4.3 Sampling Techniques .....	22
4.5 Reflexivity .....	23
4.6 Methods and Tools used .....	23
4.6.1 Participant Observation .....	23
4.6.2 Key Informant Interviews .....	24
4.6.3 Focus Group Discussion .....	25
4.7 Challenges Faced and Strategies used to Encounter Them .....	25
4.8 Methods of Data Analysis .....	26
4.9 Ethical Considerations and Consent .....	26
<b>Chapter 5: Motivation and Experiences of Adoptive Parents: Exploring the Decision to Adopt and the Journey of Adoption .....</b>	<b>28</b>
5 Introduction .....	28
5.1 Understanding the Motivations and Experiences of Families Involved in Domestic Adoption .....	28
5.1.1 Religious Motivation .....	28
5.1.2 Infertility as a motivating factor to decide to Adopt a Child.....	31
5.1.3 Discovering the Joy of Motherhood: Finding Purpose and Fulfilment in Raising a Child .....	32
5.2 Experience and Cultural Rituals practiced after adopting a child ...	34
5.3 Discussion .....	35
5.3.1 Social constructionism of Motherhood .....	35
5.3.2 Theory of social stigma and motherhood .....	36
<b>Chapter 6: Policy and Legislation on Domestic Adoption in Ethiopia: Insights from experts working in the Ministry of Women Children and Youth, Police, and Court of Sabata, Ethiopia .....</b>	<b>38</b>
6 Introduction .....	38
6.1 Eligibility Criteria to Adopt a child Domestically .....	38
6.2 Insights of Experts working in the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth.....	40
6.2.1 Why domestic Adoption? .....	41
6.2.2 Difficulties Encountered in the Process of Placing Children with Adoptive Parents .....	43
6.3 Insights from Police.....	44
6.4 Insights from experts working at Mana Murtii Aanaa Magaala Sabbataa (District Court of the City of Sabata) .....	45

<b>6.5 Insights from experts working in Sebeta’s Foster care called Tursistu Daimani .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>6.6 Discussion .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>7. Introduction.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>7.1 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>7.2 Recommendations.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>61</b>

# Abstract

This thesis investigates the practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata region in Ethiopia, focusing on the cultural dynamics involving adopting parents, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, the court system, and temporary residences for abandoned children. Adopting a child domestically is a complex and multifaceted process that involves numerous stakeholders and cultural considerations. By examining the roles and interactions of these key actors, this research aims to shed light on the dynamics and practices of domestic adoption in the Sabata region.

The study uses ethnographic and qualitative research methods applying Participant observation, key informant interviews and focus group discussion with adopting parents, representatives from the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, court officials, and staff members of temporary residences for abandoned children. These interviews are supplemented with a comprehensive review of relevant literature, policy documents, and legal frameworks governing adoption practices in the region.

The research findings reveal the motivations, experiences, and expectations of adopting parents throughout the adoption process. It explores the factors that influence their decision to adopt domestically and examines the impact of cultural norms, social pressures, and legal considerations on their journey to parenthood. Furthermore, the study investigates the role of the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth in facilitating the adoption process, including their policies, procedures, and support services provided to adopting parents and temporary residences.

Additionally, the research examines the judicial aspects of domestic adoption, analysing the role of the court system of the region called Mana Murtii Aanaa Magaala Sabbataa(District Court of the City of Sabata).

Lastly, the thesis explores the significance of temporary residences for abandoned children in the Sabata region called Tursistu Daimani, examining their role in providing care, support, and socialization opportunities for children awaiting adoption.

By offering a comprehensive understanding of the practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata region, this research contributes to the existing literature on adoption and provides valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in the adoption process. The findings of this study aim to inform future policy development, improve adoption practices, and ultimately enhance the well-being of children and families involved in domestic adoption within the Sabata region.



# Acknowledgements

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Ida Marie Lyså, for her unwavering support, invaluable guidance, and continuous encouragement. Her expertise, insightful feedback, and dedication to my academic growth have been instrumental in shaping this research. I am truly grateful for her mentorship and the opportunities she has provided me with.

I am indebted to my study participants, whose valuable insights and contributions have greatly enriched this research. Their willingness to share their knowledge and experiences has been crucial in deepening my understanding of the subject matter. I sincerely appreciate their time and participation.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Professor Tatek Abebe for his valuable input and guidance. I am incredibly grateful for his belief in me, which led to my selection as a recipient of the NORPART scholarship. His continuous advice and support throughout my studies, as well as on the kick start of my thesis, have been invaluable. His expertise in the field and his constructive feedback have significantly contributed to the development of this thesis. I am deeply grateful for his support and the knowledge he has shared with me.

I am indebted to my brother, Dawit Getachew, for his unwavering belief in my abilities and his unwavering support throughout this endeavor. His encouragement, constructive discussions, and willingness to lend a helping hand have been invaluable.

To my dear mother, Zenebech Wereti, and my sister, Haymanot Getachew, I am profoundly grateful for their love, encouragement, and understanding. Their unwavering belief in me has been a constant motivation, and their support has been indispensable in every step of this journey.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and friendship of my dear friends Bethelehem Getachew, Biruktawit Fekadu, and Rakeb Dubale. Their companionship, encouragement, and stimulating discussions have played a significant role in shaping my thoughts and refining my research. I am grateful for their unwavering support and for being there for me during both the challenging and joyous moments.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to all those who have contributed to this research in any way, whether through their time, knowledge, or assistance. Your support has been invaluable, and I am sincerely grateful for your contributions.

In conclusion, the completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the individuals mentioned above, including my study participants. I am deeply grateful for their unwavering belief in me and their contributions to this research.

# List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Sebeta-Awas District (drawn based on GIS Data).....5  
Figure 2: A picture taken from foster care called Tursistu Daimani of Sabata zone..... 39  
Figure 4: Pictures take from the foster care of sabata called (Tursistu Daimani of Sabata zone) ..... 40

# Acronyms

UNCRC- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UN-United Nations

MOWCY- Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth.

ACRHC- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

UNAIDS- United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund.

USAID- United States Agency for International Development.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Protecting and caring for parentless children is a major policy challenge, according to (Abebe & Aase, 2007). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets standards for the well-being of children without parental care. Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced an orphanage crisis due to factors such as civil war, poverty, and disease. An estimated 12.3 million children had lost one or both parents, with predictions of the number rising to 18.4 million by 2010 (Unicef, 2018). Blackie (2014) identified, HIV/AIDS, poverty, natural death of parents, family breakdown, unwanted/unplanned pregnancy, conflict, hunger, drought, and displacement as reasons for the orphan crisis in Ethiopia. Despite accounting for only 10% of the country's population, 80% of AIDS orphans come from this area (UNICEF, 2003 as cited in (Roby & Shaw, 2006)). To address the orphan crisis, the UN General Assembly took significant steps in 2001, including the identification of a model for orphan care, capacity building of families, community-based responses, access to essential services, government involvement in child protection, and raising awareness. These efforts were documented in "Children on the Brink," which influenced national and international orphan care policies and practices (UNAIDS, UNICEF, & USAID, 2002 as cited in Abebe & Asse, 2007).

The term "Children on the Brink" refers to a report that played a significant role in guiding the development of national and international orphan care policies and practices (UNAIDS, UNICEF, & USAID, 2002 as cited in Abebe, 2009). This report, titled "Children on the Brink," outlined key strategies for addressing the orphan crisis and emphasized the importance of capacity building, community-based responses, access to essential services, government involvement, and raising awareness. It is a recognized and influential document in the field of orphan care.

Currently, the alternative care service for parentless children in Ethiopia is extended family, domestic adoption, foster care, inter country adoption, group homes, and institutional care (Groza & Bunkers, 2014). Adoption is defined as an arrangement that can be created between person or a child, or between government or private orphanages and the adopted child as stated in Article 180 and 192 of the Ethiopian family code, (Beckstrom, 1972). The Ethiopian law of adoption is different from the international adoption and its stated-on article 182 and 190 of the Ethiopian family code (Beckstrom, 1972). Ethiopia is a signatory to the United Nation convention on the rights of the child ratified in 2002. UNCRC states that,

A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the state (United Nations, 1989, Article 20).

According to Holmes and Farnfield (2014), the African Charter on the Welfare and Rights of the Child (ACRWC) emphasizes that children who are separated from their parents should receive unique protection and be provided with alternative family care. The state is also responsible for taking all possible steps to trace and reunite children with their parents.

Domestic adoption refers to the process of adopting a child or infant from within the same country, where the adopted child is selected from within their country of birth (Redmond & Martin, 2023). The ban on intercountry adoption has been a significant

factor in driving the shift towards in-country adoption. Ethiopia was one of the largest source countries for international adoptions by US citizens, accounting for approximately 20% of the total number of international adoptions (BBC news,2018). However, in 2013, a US couple was convicted of killing an adopted Ethiopian girl, which triggered the ban on international adoption (BBC News,2018). The adoption process in Ethiopia has also faced serious scrutiny, with rights groups raising concerns about potential abuse by human traffickers who view it as a lucrative market (BBC News, 2018). Since 1999, over 15,000 Ethiopian children have been adopted in the US, and many have also been taken to European countries such as Spain, France, and Italy (BBC News,2018).

The ban in intercountry adoption led to the shift to other forms of care in Ethiopia such as the institutional care, foster care, and the domestic adoption. The reason for the ban of the international adoption in 2018, is due to the fear that it could cause physical and psychological problems on orphan children (Loibl, 2021). International adoption is considered as an act of charitable practice that transfer a child from extreme poverty and its vulnerabilities to the wealth, comfort, and opportunities of developed countries (Loibl, 2021).

Having said this, in this study I will explore the practice and role of the domestic adoption in Sabata, a community in the outskirts of Addis Ababa, Oromia regional state, Ethiopia. The Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MoWCY) is the issuing body of the Directive on Foster Family and Domestic Adoption Services (the Directive hereafter). The reason behind the need to come up with the Directive is the fact that the revised family code of Ethiopia Proclamation No 213/2001 on adoption contains general principles and requires a directive for proper implementation (Fokala, 2022).

## **1.2 Research questions**

### **1.2.1 General research question**

- What is the role and significance of domestic adoption as a cultural practice of raising children?

### **1.2.2 Specific Research question**

- What are the perspectives, motivation and experiences of families involved in the adoption practices?
- What are the perspectives, and experience of people working in the government offices that work on the facilitation of domestic adoption around Sabata area?

## **2 Problem statement**

The practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata region is influenced by various cultural practices involving adopting parents, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, the court system, and temporary residences for abandoned children. However, despite the significance of these cultural dynamics, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the challenges and complexities surrounding domestic adoption in this specific context. This knowledge gap hinders the development of effective policies and practices, potentially impacting the well-being of children and families involved in the adoption process.

The existing literature on domestic adoption in the Sabata region is limited, and research primarily focuses on international adoption or general adoption practices. The unique cultural factors and specific roles of key stakeholders involved in domestic adoption have not been adequately explored. Consequently, critical issues related to the motivations,

experiences, and expectations of adopting parents, the efficacy of the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth in facilitating adoptions, the functioning of the court system, and the role of temporary residences for abandoned children remain understudied.

Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the challenges and cultural considerations of domestic adoption in the Sabata region hampers the ability to address potential issues effectively. Without clear insights into the motivations and experiences of adopting parents, the policies and support services provided by the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth may not fully meet the needs of families involved in domestic adoption. Similarly, the court system may face challenges in ensuring transparency, legality, and the best interests of the child without a comprehensive understanding of the cultural dynamics at play.

To bridge this gap, it is imperative to undertake a research study that examines the practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata region, with a specific focus on the cultural practices involving adopting parents, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, the court system, and temporary residences for abandoned children. This research will provide valuable insights into the challenges, complexities, and cultural considerations associated with domestic adoption in this context. Ultimately, this study aims to inform policy development, improve adoption practices, and enhance the well-being of children and families involved in domestic adoption in the Sabata region.

### **3 Personal Motivation**

The practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata region has captured my attention and ignited my curiosity to delve deeper into its significance. Unlike international adoption, which exposes children to new identities, cultures, and values of other countries, domestic adoption offers a unique opportunity to raise children in a sustained cultural way. During a childcare crisis and the erosion of cultural practices, this region has witnessed a concerning trend of child abandonment in its industrial zones. For various reasons, birth parents choose to leave their children in these areas, whether due to economic, social, or political factors. In response, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth has taken on the responsibility of rescuing these children and providing them with temporary residence. This sets the stage for potential adopting parents who meet the criteria for adoption based on established rules and regulations. Upon successful adoption, the mother assumes the role of a birth parent and takes on the cultural responsibility of raising the child. She resides in a designated house for a period of 3 to 6 months, during which time neighbours and families visit frequently to offer support and guidance. This unique cultural practice has piqued my interest and serves as the driving force behind my research on the practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata region, an area marked by its industrial zones and unfortunately common cases of child abandonment.

### **4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of conducting a study on the practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata area is multi-faceted and impactful. Firstly, such a study would shed light on the cultural significance of domestic adoption as a means of raising children in a sustained manner within the local context. Understanding the values, traditions, and customs associated with this practice can contribute to preserving and revitalizing cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the study would offer valuable information about the role and effectiveness of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth in rescuing abandoned children and

facilitating the adoption process. Evaluating the ministry's practices and procedures can lead to improvements in their ability to protect and support vulnerable children in the region.

Additionally, understanding the experiences and perspectives of adopting parents who assume the role of birth parents in the cultural upbringing of the adopted child can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of this unique form of adoption. Examining their motivations, challenges, and successes can inform best practices and support systems for both adopting parents and adopted children.

In addition to evaluating the role and effectiveness of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, the study also included an examination of the involvement and contributions of the police, court system, and the temporary residence place of abandoned children.

The police play a crucial role in responding to reports of child abandonment and ensuring the safety and well-being of the abandoned children. It can also shed light on any challenges or gaps in their response, which can then be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of child protection efforts.

By including the perspectives and practices of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, the police, the court system, and the temporary residence places, the study can offer a comprehensive assessment of the domestic adoption process in the Sabata area. The findings would not only inform improvements within the ministry but also contribute to a holistic understanding of the roles, challenges, and opportunities of all stakeholders involved in the protection and support of abandoned children.

Overall, conducting a study on the practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata area holds significance in terms of cultural preservation, addressing child abandonment, enhancing the role of governmental agencies, and improving the overall well-being of children within the region. The findings of this study is believed to contribute to informed decision-making, policy development, and the promotion of practices that prioritize the best interests of children and their cultural heritage.

## 5 Study Area

### Map of Sebeta

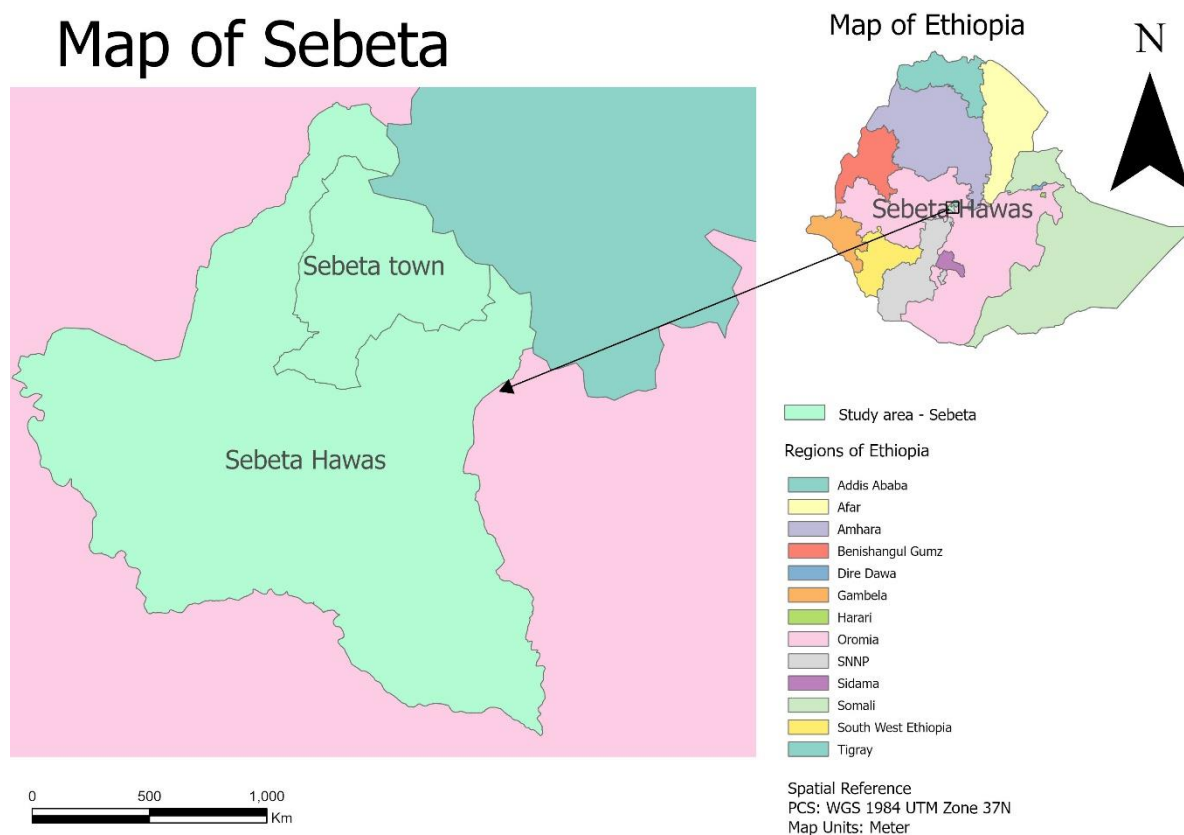


Figure 1: Map of Sebeta-Awas District (drawn based on GIS Data)

This study was conducted in Sebeta-Awas District, Oromia Region, Ethiopia, located 24-45 km southwest of the capital, Addis Ababa. The district spans an area of 87,532 hectares and shares borders with Akaki District in the east, Kerssa and Tole districts in the south, Welmera District in the north, and Ilu and Ejere districts in the west. The landscape of Sebeta-Awas consists of mountains and hills (Wachacha and Hoche mountains) as well as marshy plains (Furi-Gara-Bello, Gejja Ballachis, and Jammo). It is surrounded by the Awash water shade in the west. The district's altitude ranges from 1800 to 3385 meters above sea level, according to unpublished data from the Sabata Awas District Rural and Agricultural Office in 2001.

Agricultural activity is the primary source of livelihood in Sebeta-Awas District. The residents of the district classify their lands into functional categories such as grazing land, agricultural land, homestead land, and forestland (Mekonen et al., 2015). According to the annual report of the Sebeta-Awas District Rural and Agricultural Development Office, out of the total land area of 87,532 hectares, 73,838 hectares (84.4%) are utilized for agriculture, cultivating various crops for household consumption and local market sale. Additionally, 3,689 hectares (4.2%) of land are designated as grazing areas, according to unpublished data from the Sabata Awas District Rural and Agricultural Office in 2006( as cited in Mekonen et al., 2015).

## **6 Chapter Overview**

This chapter provides an overview of the research study on the practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata region, located in the outskirts of Addis Ababa, Oromia regional state, Ethiopia. The chapter begins by presenting the research questions that will guide the study, focusing on the role and significance of domestic adoption as a cultural practice of raising children. The specific research questions explore the perspectives, motivations, and experiences of adopting families, as well as the perspectives and experiences of government officials involved in domestic adoption.

Next, the problem statement is discussed, highlighting the existing knowledge gap and the need for comprehensive understanding regarding the challenges and complexities surrounding domestic adoption in the Sabata region. The limited literature on domestic adoption in this specific context is addressed, emphasizing the lack of exploration of unique cultural factors and key stakeholders' roles.

The chapter also includes a section on personal motivation, where the researcher explains their interest in studying domestic adoption in the Sabata region. The specific context of child abandonment in industrial zones and the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth's involvement in rescuing abandoned children are mentioned as the driving force behind the research.

Finally, the significance of the study is outlined, emphasizing its contribution to preserving cultural heritage, evaluating the role of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, understanding adopting parents' experiences, and examining the involvement of other stakeholders such as the police, court system, and temporary residence places. The chapter concludes by stating that the study's findings will inform decision-making, policy development, and practices that prioritize the well-being of children and their cultural heritage.

Overall, this chapter sets the stage for the research study by providing an overview of the research questions, problem statement, personal motivation, and the significance of studying domestic adoption in the Sabata region.



# Chapter 2: Context

## 2 Introduction

The chapter begins with an exploration of Ethiopia's geographical and cultural context, highlighting its position in eastern Africa and the diverse ethnic groups and religions that contribute to its vibrant society. The country's historical background, including the establishment of a federal republic and the ancient roots of Ethiopian civilization, serves as a backdrop for understanding the social fabric in which domestic adoption operates. Moving forward, the concept of households and extended families is introduced, shedding light on their definitions and dynamics. I have tried to explore how households are characterized by shared living arrangements and economic cooperation, while extended families maintain kinship ties despite living apart. The migration of households, involving individuals moving from one place to another, is also examined, emphasizing its role in diversifying income sources, and seeking improved living conditions.

Within the framework of extended families and migration, the chapter explores the specific context of child migration within extended families in Ethiopia. The motivations behind child migration, such as income generation and social support, are discussed, highlighting the different roles and opportunities available for boys and girls within the extended family network. The chapter further examines the National Children Policy of Ethiopia, which establishes the rights of children and emphasizes the importance of expanding domestic alternative care options. I also tried to explore the evolving landscape of adoption in Ethiopia, including the recent ban on intercountry adoption and the focus on prioritizing support for orphaned and vulnerable children through domestic mechanisms.

The legal and procedural aspects of adoption in Ethiopia are also addressed, with a focus on the revised Family Code that governs the adoption process. Key provisions, such as adoptive lineage, the effects of adoption on the child's legal status, and the age requirements for adoptive parents, are presented to provide a comprehensive understanding of the adoption framework. I will also examine the relevance of international frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights of the Child, in ensuring the protection and well-being of children in need of alternative care. Through an exploration of these topics, this chapter aims to provide a contextual understanding of domestic adoption practices in Sabata, Oromia Region. By examining the cultural, legal, and social aspects surrounding adoption in Ethiopia, we gain valuable insights into the complexities and dynamics of domestic adoption within this specific region.

This chapter commences with a general information about background information about the country such as culture, ethnicity, and then gives overview on understanding households, extended families, and on household Migration, religion of the country and ideas about child rearing practices in Ethiopia and on how all the cultural aspects in one way or another is intertwined with the practice of domestic child adoption and brief description of a section from UNCRC and ACRC and present review of different policies and binding rules that states and discuss about domestic adoption specifically in Sabata region.

## **2.1 Historical Background of Ethiopia**

This section provides an overview of Ethiopia, a landlocked country located in the eastern part of Africa on the Horn of Africa, with an estimated population of over 107 million (Britannica, 2020).

Ethiopia is known for its cultural diversity and rich historical heritage(Levine, 2014). The chapter explores various aspects of Ethiopia, including its geography, demographics, religious composition, and agricultural practices(Levine, 2014). Additionally, it delves into the establishment of the federal republic in 1995 and highlights the significance of Ethiopia's ancient history, particularly the kingdoms of Da'amat and Aksum. The introduction of Christianity in the 4th century CE and the prominence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are also discussed.

Ethiopia, officially known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, is in the eastern part of Africa and is situated on the Horn of Africa, which is the continent's easternmost projection(Yasin, 2010). With an estimated area of 410,678 square miles (1,063,652 square kilometers), it is a landlocked country. Ethiopia has a population of approximately 107,089,000(Yasin, 2010). The capital city is Addis Ababa.

Ethiopia is home to a diverse population, with approximately one-third being Amhara, one-third Oromo, and the remainder consisting of Tigray, Afar, Somali, Saho, and Agew ethnic groups (Yasin, 2010).The dominant languages spoken in Ethiopia are Amharic and Oromo. The country's religious landscape is characterized by a mix of Christianity (primarily Ethiopian Orthodox and Protestant denominations), Islam, and traditional beliefs(Yasin, 2010).

Geographically, Ethiopia features a mountainous terrain in the north, while the east and west are predominantly lowlands. The central Ethiopian Plateau is divided by the Great Rift Valley, which separates the eastern and western highlands(Billi, 2015). The climate varies across the country, with temperate conditions in the highlands, which are mainly savanna, and hotter climates in the arid lowlands. Ethiopia has faced challenges such as intensive farming, deforestation, severe erosion, periodic droughts, and occasional food shortages. Agriculture primarily serves subsistence purposes, with cereals being the main crop, and livestock also playing a crucial role in the economy(Amsalu & Adem, 2009)Coffee is the country's main export commodity, followed by hides and skins(Amsalu & Adem, 2009).

A new federal republic was established in 1995; it has two legislative houses, the head of state is the president, and the head of government is the prime minister (Mihiretu,2022). Ethiopia, the Biblical land of Kush, was inhabited from earliest ancient times and was once under ancient Egyptian rule(Melaku & Hilliard). Ge'ez-speaking agriculturalists established the kingdom of Da'amat in the 7th century BC. After 300 BCE they were superseded by the kingdom of Aksum, whose King MenilekI was according to legend, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba(Milkias & Metaferia, 2005). Christianity was introduced in the 4th century CE and became widespread(Salzman, 2004).

### **2.1.1 Religion, Poverty and Demography in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is a country known for its religious diversity, with Christianity and Islam being the two dominant religions. Christianity, particularly Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, holds immense importance in the lives of many Ethiopians (Abbink, 1998). The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, with its deep historical and cultural roots, is the largest

religious denomination in the country, with approximately 43% of the population identifying as Ethiopian Orthodox Christians(MOARETA, 2015).The church's teachings and practices play a central role in the lives of its followers, shaping their moral and ethical perspectives, family structures, and social interactions (Smith, 2017).

In addition to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, other Christian denominations have gained followers over the years. Protestantism, introduced to Ethiopia in the 19th century, has witnessed significant growth, with diverse Protestant churches and movements making up a substantial portion of the Christian population(Fantini, 2015).Catholicism also has a notable presence, particularly among certain ethnic communities and urban centres(Chacko, 2003). Islam, with its roots dating back to the 7th century, is the second-largest religion in Ethiopia, comprising around 34% of the population(Amenu, 2008). The practice of Islam in Ethiopia has its distinct traditions, influenced by both local customs and broader Islamic traditions(Abbink, 1998).

Religious values and beliefs play a fundamental role in Ethiopian society. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, for example, emphasizes communal values, religious festivals, and traditional practices(Abbink, 1998). The concept of ubuntu, an African philosophy centered around human interconnectedness and the importance of community, is also deeply embedded in Ethiopian religious and cultural values(PETROS, 2019). These religious values influence various aspects of life, including attitudes towards health, family planning, social issues, and governance(PETROS, 2019). They provide a moral framework for decision-making and guide social interactions within communities.

Ethiopia faces significant challenges in addressing poverty. It is one of the least developed countries globally, with a large proportion of the population living below the poverty line. According to the (Bank, 2020)over 20 million Ethiopians live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$1.90 per day. Poverty in Ethiopia is a complex issue influenced by various factors, including limited access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, and employment opportunities (Bernard et al., 2019).Most of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods, and vulnerabilities such as drought, climate change, and food insecurity further exacerbate poverty levels(Gafurov et al., 2018).

The Ethiopian government, in collaboration with international organizations and non-governmental entities, has implemented various poverty reduction strategies. These initiatives focus on improving agricultural productivity, enhancing access to education and healthcare, promoting rural development, and fostering economic growth(Gobeil et al., 2021). Efforts have also been made to enhance social protection programs, such as the Productive Safety Net Program, to mitigate the impact of shocks and vulnerabilities on vulnerable populations(Gobeil et al., 2021). While progress has been made in poverty reduction, sustained efforts are needed to achieve substantial and inclusive economic growth and improve the standard of living for all Ethiopians(Gobeil et al., 2021).

Ethiopia is the second-most populous country in Africa, with a diverse demographic profile. As of the most recent data, the population is estimated to be over 120 million people (Bailey et al., 2011). The country has experienced significant population growth over the past few decades, with an average annual growth rate of around 2.5% (United Nations, 2019).

Ethiopia has a relatively young population, with a median age of around 20 years (World Bank, 2020). The youth population (aged 15-24) constitutes a substantial portion of the overall population, presenting both opportunities and challenges for the country's development (Central Statistical Agency, 2019). This youthful demographic structure can contribute to a dynamic workforce, innovation, and economic growth, but it also places pressure on education, employment, and social services.

Ethnic diversity is a defining characteristic of Ethiopia, with numerous ethnic groups and languages spoken across the country. The largest ethnic groups include the Oromo, Amhara, Somali, and Tigray, although there are many more ethnic communities with distinct cultures and traditions (Teferi, 2012). This diversity contributes to the richness of Ethiopian society but can also present social and political complexities.

Understanding the demographic composition of Ethiopia is crucial for analysing social, economic, and cultural dynamics within the country. It helps inform policies and interventions related to education, healthcare, employment, and social welfare, considering the specific needs and characteristics of different population (Narrod et al., 2012).

### **2.1.2 Family Dynamics and Gender roles in Ethiopia**

Family dynamics in Ethiopia are characterized by strong social ties and a sense of collective identity. Ethiopian families often extend beyond the nuclear unit, encompassing multiple generations and relatives. This extended family system, known as "gosa," plays a crucial role in the daily lives and well-being of individuals (Smith, 2017). It fosters a deep sense of interconnectedness, with family members providing support, guidance, and assistance to one another (Abbink, 1998).

The concept of "gosa" emphasizes the importance of maintaining close relationships with extended family members, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. These extended family networks often live in proximity or within the same community, facilitating frequent interaction and shared responsibilities (Wilson, 1986). The extended family serves as a safety net during times of hardship, providing emotional and financial support to family members in need (Abebe & Aase, 2007)

Religious affiliations play a significant role in shaping family dynamics in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is the largest religious denomination, and its teachings strongly influence family values, practices, and rituals (Tony, 2013). The Ethiopian Orthodox Church places a high value on family unity and encourages families to prioritize their spiritual well-being (Abbink, 1998). Religious ceremonies, such as baptism and marriage, hold great importance and are often celebrated with the participation of extended family members (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Similarly, Islam, the second-largest religion in Ethiopia, provides a framework for family life, emphasizing the importance of marriage, parenthood, and communal responsibilities (Dercon, 2019).

Within Ethiopian families, respect for elders and intergenerational relationships are highly valued. Elders hold a position of authority and are regarded as the repositories of wisdom and experience (Muchie & Bayeh, 2015). They play a central role in decision-making processes, providing guidance and passing down cultural traditions, values, and knowledge to younger family members (Abbink, 1998). The wisdom and guidance of elders are sought in important family matters, such as marriage arrangements and dispute resolution (Eshetu, 2018). Gender dynamics and roles within Ethiopian families are influenced by cultural norms and traditions. Traditionally, gender roles have been characterized by distinct responsibilities assigned to males and females (Adelaju, 2015). Men are often expected to be the primary providers for the family, engaging in agricultural or other economic activities, while women are typically responsible for domestic chores, childcare, and nurturing family relationships (Harris, 2016). However, it is important to note that gender roles and expectations are not static and have been subject to changes over time.

In recent years, efforts have been made to promote gender equality and empower women in Ethiopian society. Various initiatives aim to challenge traditional gender norms and create opportunities for women to participate in education, employment, and decision-making processes (Bernard et al., 2019). Women's organizations and advocacy groups have played a significant role in raising awareness about gender issues and advocating for women's rights and empowerment (Rao & Kelleher, 2005). These efforts seek to create a more equitable and inclusive society where women and men have equal opportunities and share responsibilities within the family. Overall, family dynamics in Ethiopia are characterized by strong intergenerational bonds, communal support, and the influence of religious and cultural values. The extended family system, with its emphasis on interconnectedness, provides a sense of belonging and social cohesion. While traditional gender roles persist, efforts are underway to promote gender equality and empower women, recognizing the valuable contributions they make to family and society.

### **2.1.3 Understanding Households, Extended Families, and Household Migration: An Overview**

Understanding households, extended families, and child migration within these structures is crucial for comprehending domestic adoption processes. Domestic adoption often occurs within extended families, where children may be placed with relatives or other households. This knowledge helps us understand the cultural and social factors influencing adoption decisions and adoptive parents' expectations.

Recognizing child migration within extended families as a common practice reveals the motivations and perspectives of adopting parents. It highlights the importance of cultural connections and knowledge transmission, influencing preferences for a child's cultural background in adoption. Shared child-rearing responsibilities within extended families and communities underscore the support networks surrounding domestic adoption. This interconnectedness influences the adoption process and support provided to adopting parents and adopted children.

In summary, knowledge about households, extended families, and child migration informs the cultural, social, and economic contexts of domestic adoption. It enhances understanding of motivations, expectations, and support systems, leading to more informed and culturally sensitive adoption policies and practices.

#### **2.1.4 Households, Extended Families, and Household Migration**

In the context of households, they are defined as units where people live together and share their income, and at least one meal is eaten together each day. This definition is based on the World Bank's classification from 2001 (cited in Abebe, 2008). Extended families, on the other hand, are bonded through blood or kinship relations but often live apart from each other. It is common for members of extended families to reside in separate households, and the composition of these households may change over time due to individual migration, among other factors (Ansell & Van Blerk, 2004)

The migration of households, which involves members moving from one place to another, occurs for various reasons. For both adults and children, migration serves to diversify income sources and escape the daily hardships of life Townsend (1997) and Sporton, Thomas, and Morrison (1999, as cited in Young & Ansell, 2003). In summary, family collectives encompass extended families living together or apart, as well as the support networks provided through kinship ties. Households are defined as units where individuals reside together and share income and meals. The migration of households occurs for reasons such as seeking better economic opportunities and escaping difficult living conditions. Research suggests that boys often engage in activities such as animal herding, which directly contribute to the household's income (Kimane & Mturi, 2001, as cited in Young & Ansell, 2003). This type of migration allows boys to utilize their skills and contribute financially to their families. On the other hand, girls may be sent to assist in various roles within the extended family, such as helping grandparents or childless married couples. Some girls may migrate to economically better-off families, seeking financial support and opportunities (Kimane & Mturi, 2001, as cited in Young & Ansell, 2003).

Ansell and Van Blerk (2004), highlight the significance of child-rearing practices within extended families and the wider community. In many societies, child-rearing responsibilities are shared not only by parents but also by other family members and community members. This practice normalizes child migration within extended families, as children are seen as valuable assets who can contribute to the well-being of other households. Grandparents are regarded as positive contributors who impart cultural knowledge to the younger generation.

Child migration within extended families facilitates cultural exchange and learning. Children who are entrusted to the care of other households gain insights into different customs, traditions, and ways of life. Simultaneously, they bring their own cultural background and experiences, enriching the lives of the families they join. This mutual exchange fosters a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence within the extended family network. The migration of boys and girls within extended families serves multiple purposes, including income generation for the household and social support for both the migrating children and the families they join.

## **2.2 Promoting the Rights of Children and Ensuring Safe and Appropriate Care through Legal Adoption Procedures**

The National Children Policy of Ethiopia serves as a guiding and legislative document that outlines the rights of children and the importance of expanding domestic alternative care options for children who are separated from their families for various (Cantwell & UNICEF, 2014). Intercountry adoption was previously one of the alternative care options; however, it has been banned in recent years due to concerns about identity crisis, psychological and social problems faced by adoptees (Cantwell & UNICEF, 2014). The policy emphasizes the need to prioritize support for orphaned and vulnerable children through domestic alternative care mechanisms (Shibuya & Taylor, 2013).

In accordance with the requirements set by the Ethiopian government, prospective adoptive parents must fulfil certain criteria. The documents to be submitted by the applicant from their permanent domicile should include proof of economic status from a recognized source, police clearance, medical certificates from recognized hospitals or clinics, as well as birth and marriage certificates. Additionally, two passport-size photographs of the prospective adoption parent(s) should be provided. All these documents must be authenticated by the Ethiopian Embassy or Consulate and submitted or forwarded directly by the concerned person or agency to the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA)(Shiferaw, 2008).

The revised Family Code of Ethiopia contains various articles that govern the process of adoption(Code, 2000). These provisions are briefly described in the 10th chapter of the Family Code. Article 180 addresses adoptive lineage, which can be established through an agreement between a person and a child. According to Article 182, an adopted child shall, for all purposes, be considered the child of the adopter(Proclamation, 2007). However, the adoption will have no effect on the ascendants or collaterals of the adopter who have expressly opposed the adoption. The opposition must be registered in a court registry within one year from the court's approval of the adoption agreement (Proclamation, 2007). In cases where a choice must be made between the family of adoption and the family of origin, the family of adoption shall prevail (Code, 2000). Furthermore, any person who is at least twenty-five years old may adopt, and in cases where adoption is made by two spouses, it is sufficient for one of them to fulfil the age requirement (Code, 2000).

There are also instances where Children might be integrated to families who are neither birth families nor extended families in the process of adoption where mostly children are abandoned for known and unknown reasons and fail to get assistance from their own parents. In this scenario they are mostly taken care of by responsible government orphanages being a temporary shelter for them until they are taken over by adopting families. The adoption process takes place in a legal way between the adopters and the government bodies which is Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth. UNCRC Article 21 States that, parties that recognize and/or permit the system of adoption shall ensure that the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration and they shall: (a) Ensure that the adoption of a child is authorized only by competent authorities who determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, b) that the adoption is permissible in view of the child's status concerning parents, relatives and legal guardians and that, c) if required,

the persons concerned have given their informed consent to the adoption on the basis of such counselling as may be necessary.

Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) explains how destitute children can be protected and provided with appropriate care while ensuring their best interests are not compromised. It states that a child who is destitute or voluntarily chooses to be away from their family environment, either temporarily or permanently, should receive special safeguards and assistance. States are required to have national laws in place to ensure alternative care for these vulnerable children (UNCRC, Article 20). This alternative care may include foster placement or placement in suitable institutions for the care of children.

Furthermore, according to the African Charter on the Rights of the Child (1990), specifically Article 25, responsible bodies are tasked with ensuring that adoption takes place in accordance with existing laws and procedures, and based on relevant information about the child, their parents, or relatives. Adopting parents are required to give informed consent to the adoption. This emphasizes the importance of legal frameworks and due diligence in the adoption process, ensuring that the child's rights and best interests are protected.

## **2.3 Chapter Summary**

The context chapter explores the context and legal framework of domestic adoption in Sabata, Oromia Region, Ethiopia. It discusses the geographical, cultural, and historical background of Ethiopia, Family Dynamics and gender roles in Ethiopia, religion, poverty and demography of the country, emphasizing its diverse ethnic groups and the establishment of a federal republic. The concepts of households, extended families, and household migration are examined, along with child migration within extended families. The chapter also focuses on the legal and policy aspects of adoption in Ethiopia, including the National Children Policy, the ban on intercountry adoption, and the revised Family Code. It explores alternative care options and international frameworks for protecting children. Overall, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of domestic adoption practices in the region.



# Chapter 3: Theoretical-Frameworks

## 3. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the theoretical frameworks that underpin the research. Specifically, this chapter delves into two related fields of research: childhood studies and specific sociological theories. This chapter aims to explore the theoretical frameworks that underpin the research on the practice of domestic adoption and the cultural dynamics involved in the Sabata region. The following theories have been utilized in this study social constructionism of childhood, Goffman's theory of stigma and social identity, Intergenerational theories, Life transition theories, Theory of social constructionism of motherhood.

These theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for understanding the complexities and cultural factors that shape the adoption process and the experiences of adopting parents in the Sabata region. By incorporating these theories, the research aims to gain insights into the motivations, decision-making processes, and experiences of adopting parents, as well as the broader social and cultural contexts that influence domestic adoption practices in the Sabata region.

### 3.1 Social constructionism Theory

According to Prout and James (2015), social constructionism of childhood is a theoretical perspective that suggests that childhood is a social and cultural construction, shaped by social and cultural norms, values, and practices. This means that childhood varies across time, space, and context, and can be different across the globe. Additionally, the social construction of childhood is influenced by factors (Prout & James, 2015) such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity, which can significantly impact childhood experiences, particularly for children from marginalized or disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to consider the cultural and social contexts in which childhood is constructed and experienced for research purposes, as this can have significant implications for how children are treated, valued, and perceived, and can challenge universalistic assumptions about childhood (Prout & James, 2015).

It's stated in Norozi and Moen (2016), that childhood is socially constructed which simply means depending on differential of culture and belief, childhood is different across different societies and context. Moreover, childhood could also vary in the same society and communities depending different social factors such as gender and social class, which leads to the conclusion that childhood is neither neutral nor universal. In exploring about childhood as social construction, it has been attempted to explicate certain of the conceptions at the heart of social studies of children and childhood (Norozi & Moen, 2016). For example, the notion of childhood has undergone tremendous change over the centuries. What it has been thought 'natural' for children to do has changed, as well as what parents were expected to do for their children (Aries, 1962). It is only in relatively recent historical times that children have ceased to be simply small adults in all but their legal rights; in other words, throughout most of human history, children were not seen as a distinct social category with their own unique needs and rights. Instead, they were viewed as miniature versions of adults and were expected to behave accordingly, In

many societies, children were required to work from a young age and were held responsible for their actions in the same way as adults(Aries, 1962).

As Burr and Dick (2017)notes, "Western psychology, as it has been practiced and exported around the world, has been accused of being imperialist in its attitude toward other cultures, supplanting their indigenous ways of thinking with western ideas" (p. 4). Therefore, it is the way that Western psychology has been applied to other cultures that has been criticized, rather than psychology as a discipline itself. Social constructionism believes that the world we are living in is understood as having different concepts, categories and although as being culturally and historically diverse across the globe (Burr & Dick, 2017). Therefore, understanding of children and adults, urban and rural life is understood differently depending on where one lives. This idea is further explained by Montgomery (2003/2007, p.46), "Social constructionists look at how categories are constructed, how bodies of knowledge are built up and how childhood and adulthood are seen and understood in any given society."

Berger and Luckmann's (as cited in, Burr,2015, p.26) stated that; "account of social life argues that human beings together create and then sustain all social phenomena through social practices." Berger and Luckman (2015) further stated that, how the world can be socially constructed by the social practices of people but at the same time experienced by them as if the nature of their world is pre-given and fixed.

motherhood. According to this theory, motherhood is not a fixed or biologically determined identity, but rather a socially constructed one that is shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological factors. As Kramarae and Spender (2004)explain, "Motherhood is not a natural condition; it is a cultural concept that varies across time and place" (p. 161).

The social construction of motherhood has been explored by scholars across various disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, and gender studies. For example, feminist scholar Butler (2011)has argued that, gender is not a fixed or essential identity, but rather a performance that is shaped by cultural and social norms. Similarly, sociologist(Hays, 1996) has explored the ways in which the ideology of intensive motherhood shapes contemporary expectations and practices of motherhood in the United States.

Critics of social constructionism have argued that it overlooks the biological and psychological aspects of motherhood. For example, evolutionary psychologists have argued that maternal instincts and emotional bonds between mothers and their children are rooted in biological factors such as hormones and brain development (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2000). However, proponents of social constructionism argue that recognizing the social construction of motherhood does not negate the importance of biology and psychology, but rather seeks to expand our understanding of how these factors interact with cultural and social norms to shape our experiences of motherhood.

Overall, the theory of social constructionism of motherhood suggests that motherhood is not solely determined by biology, but rather shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological factors. By recognizing the social construction of motherhood, we can better understand how gender-based stereotypes and inequalities are perpetuated and work towards creating more inclusive and equitable understandings of motherhood.

According to this theory, a woman's desire to have a child and be recognized as a mother may stem from societal expectations and familial traditions that prioritize motherhood as

a central role for women (Bialeschki & Michener, 1994). In many cultures, motherhood is considered a defining characteristic of womanhood, and women who do not have children may face stigmatization and social exclusion (Whitley & Kirmayer, 2008).

This pressure to conform to societal norms and expectations is known as normative influence, which can influence an individual's decision-making and behaviours (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Thus, a woman may feel compelled to have a child to gain acceptance and recognition from her family and society. This theory reflects a reality in how and why adopting parents get the initiative to adopt a child than living forever without it.

### **3.2 Theory of Stigma and Identity**

"Stigma refers to the bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier" (Goffman, 1963, p.3). Society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of these categories (Goffman, 1963). Social settings establish the categories of persons likely to be encountered there (Goffman, 1963). In my study, some of the reasons for adopting a child is to escape from stigma around being childless. The theory of stigma is ideal to describe this situation of adopting parents in terms of the ability of a society to establish categories; if someone fails to fulfil or act in accordance with the expected norms and values of that category, then they are considered as deviants.

Stigma theory notes that there is always a dual reference in the assertion that something is a social problem: (a) a reference to an objective condition, and (b) a reference to a subjective evaluation that defines that condition as in some way undesirable, destructive, or immoral (Fuller & Myers as cited Rainwater, 2018). Fuller and Myers (cited in Rainwater, 2018, p. 1) further noted that, "the objective condition is verifiable, in the sense that impartial or trained observers can describe its nature and extent". Objectives for conditions could reasonably be considered a social problem, and members of a society should see it as unwanted departure from the normal course of things (Fuller & Myers as cited Rainwater, 2018).

The idea of stigma that an infertile woman faces is also discussed by Cousineau and Domar (2007; see also McQuillan et al., as cited in Avila, 2016); when a woman is unable to fulfil pronatalist social norms, she may experience great agony because of the related social stigma from her surroundings due to her infertility; which may lead to secrecy of the condition and withdrawal from social gatherings and seeking a medical remedy without fear for potential side-effects. While some women do not desire to have children, they would experience social criticism of failing to fulfil the norms of biological reproduction. They are viewed as uncaring and selfish by pronatalist societies who highly encourage married couples to have a child (Mcquillan et al., 2012, as cited in Avila, 2016; p.9).

Avila (2016) suggests that social settings establish predetermined contexts in which specific traits are considered normative. Individuals are categorized based on the presupposed expectations of these categories, and individuals are either perceived as conforming to or deviating from these norms without conscious consideration. First impressions formed through continuous interactions with others allow people within a society to anticipate and classify individuals into socially defined categories ingrained in their minds (Avila, 2016).

Applying this understanding to adopting parents, it becomes apparent that they may be subject to societal categorization based on their adherence or deviation from expected

normative traits. Those who fail to conform to these expectations may face stigmatization or become the subject of gossip. Adopting parents may be more readily accepted. McQuillan et al. (2008, as cited in Avila, 2016, p. 24) further explain that fertility-specific distress can also arise from an individual's strong desire to become a parent. For many women, motherhood is a significant personal life goal.

In summary, Avila's (2016) insights shed light on the societal dynamics surrounding adopting parents, who may face categorization, stigma, or gossip based on their adherence or deviation from societal norms. Additionally, the importance individuals place on becoming parents, particularly through biological reproduction, can contribute to fertility-specific distress.

### **3.3 Life Transition Theories**

Life transition theories are frameworks that help explain how individuals navigate major life changes. These changes can be stressful and disruptive, but they can also provide opportunities for personal growth and development.

Bridges' Transition Model (1980) describes three stages of transition: the ending phase, the neutral zone, and the new beginning. During the ending phase, individuals let go of old ways of thinking and behaving, which may involve grieving the loss of their previous identity. In the neutral zone, individuals may experience uncertainty and discomfort as they adjust to their new roles and establish new routines and relationships. Finally, in the new beginning phase, individuals develop new ways of thinking and behaving that allow them to establish a sense of identity in their new roles and create a new structure for their lives.

In the context of domestic child adoption in Ethiopia, adoptive parents may face unique challenges related to cultural differences and the adjustment of the adopted child. These challenges may impact the transition to parenthood and require additional support and resources for successful adaptation (Moges & Tadesse, 2015).

Moges and Tadesse (2015), conducted a study on the experiences of adoptive parents in Ethiopia and found that parents faced challenges related to the legal and administrative processes of adoption, cultural differences between themselves and the child, and the adjustment of the adopted child to the new environment. This highlights the importance of providing adoptive parents with support and resources to facilitate successful adaptation and transition to parenthood.

### **3.4 Chapter summary**

The social constructionism theory explores how social phenomena are created and sustained through social practices, and how the understanding of concepts such as childhood varies across societies and cultures. Childhood is not a neutral or universal concept but is instead shaped by cultural beliefs and social factors such as gender and social class. While social constructionism does emphasize the importance of cultural and historical perspectives, there is also a more nuanced understanding that recognizes the importance of context and the role of power and privilege in shaping social practices and beliefs. This means that social constructionist research takes a more contextualized approach, recognizing that social phenomena are not completely arbitrary but are shaped by larger societal forces and power dynamics. The theory also highlights how social practices create the perception of a pre-given and fixed nature of the world. The theoretical concepts can be applied to the adoption of children, as the expectation of having a child after marriage is seen as a necessary life transition in some cultures, but

not in others. The birth of a child is also viewed as a gift from God and is associated with the accumulation of wealth in some societies.

The Theory of Stigma and Identity is a framework that describes how society establishes categories of individuals and the attributes that are considered normal and natural for these categories. The theory suggests that when someone fails to act in accordance with the expected norms and values of their category, they may be considered deviant and stigmatized by society.

# Chapter 4: Methodological Approaches

## 4 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach that was used to conduct a qualitative and ethical research with study participants. The given text describes the methodological approach, fieldwork process, sampling techniques, reflexivity, and methods/tools used in a research project on domestic adoption practices in Sabata region of Oromia. The research employed a qualitative research approach, which emphasized the involvement of research partners in the knowledge-production process. The researcher attempted to involve various stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, individuals working in foster care, adopting parents, and professionals from the court, police, and orphanage.

The fieldwork was conducted in Sabata, a town southwest of Addis Ababa, chosen for its political stability and proximity to the researcher's hometown. The field entry and gatekeeping process involved engaging with gatekeepers, obtaining necessary letters, and facing challenges in recruiting willing participants. The snowball sampling technique was used, allowing for the identification of participants with practical knowledge and experiences relevant to the research topic. Reflexivity was maintained by avoiding personal biases, respecting participants' perspectives, and acknowledging the researcher's impact on the research process and outcomes.

Primary research methods employed include participant observation, key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussion. Participant observation involved immersing oneself in the study population, observing their behaviour, and participating in their activities to gain a comprehensive understanding of their culture and practices. Key informant interviews were conducted with adopters, the Federal First Instance Court, and the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, police, and temporary residence place for abandoned children. These interviews were recorded with consent to accurately capture participants' responses. Lastly, focus group discussions were used, involving small groups of participants chosen from the ministry of women, children and youth based on shared characteristics or experiences. Thus, all the above-described information would be explored in detail in the chapter below.

## 4.1 Methodological Approach

In this research, qualitative research method was employed, which positions all participants as active and knowledgeable contributors to the knowledge-production process (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). This method emphasizes the value and importance of involving research partners in the production of knowledge (Bergold, 2007 as cited in Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Participants' potential to acquire knowledge is shaped by their biological makeup, personal and social background, and social status. To achieve mutual understanding in collaborative research, individuals must disclose their epistemological perspectives to their fellow researchers to some extent. The qualitative methodology adopted in this research views human being as the only instrument sufficiently complex to comprehend and learn about human existence (Lave & Kvale, 1995 as cited in Bergold & Thomas, 2012). This perspective challenges the traditional methodological belief that the researcher and research participants should maintain distance and replaces the issue of objectivity with the idea of making research subjects part of the research process from conception to final interpretation (Bishop, 1998).

In conducting my research, I attempted to involve all research participants in various aspects of the process, although I was unable to involve them in the initial conception stage due to being based in Norway at the time of preparing my concept note.

Upon visiting the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, I first informed them about the research aims and consulted with them about the participation of potential research subjects. I sought their assistance in recruiting adopting parents who were willing to take part in the study, and asked if adopted children could participate to gain insights into their upbringing and care by adopting parents. I explained that I would use a child-friendly method that approached sensitive issues ethically. However, the ministry strictly prohibited me from including children in the study, regardless of the method I planned to use or the individuals I selected, deeming it unethical. As a result, I immediately abandoned my plan to include adopted children in the research.

Instead, they suggested that I include individuals working in foster care to better understand abandoned children and the adoption process, as they collaboratively work with the ministry as a temporary placement of the abandoned child. I also made efforts to involve adopting parents in the research process by explaining the research aims and building trust, allowing sufficient time for them to feel comfortable giving honest answers.

Additionally, participants from the court, police, and orphanage were also involved in the research process. However, it should be noted that this section pertains to the process of field entry and gatekeeping, rather than evaluating the degree of participation by each actor. It is important to explain the involvement of each actor in detail, particularly as the reader may not be familiar with the context of the research.

## **4.2 Process on the Field**

### **4.2.1 The field work site**

Sebata, a town located southwest of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, was my preferred research location. The town has a population of 19,533 and is known for its political stability. Compared to other towns in the Oromia region where indigenous adoption practices are common, Sebata stands out as the safest and closest location to Addis Ababa with no ongoing wars or conflicts. Additionally, I identified a local NGO in Sebata that has an ongoing project linked with domestic adoption practices. This NGO provided me with valuable assistance in obtaining research participants and relevant documents. Overall, Sebata's proximity to my hometown and political stability, coupled with the availability of an NGO and gatekeepers, made it an ideal research location for my study on domestic adoption practices in Ethiopia.

### **4.2.2 Field Entry and Process of Gatekeeping**

I encountered several obstacles in gaining access to the necessary information and participants. I was introduced to a gatekeeper who worked as a field officer in a local NGO called siqe. She provided me with some initial information on the office of the Ministry of Women and Children Bureau and how they worked on domestic adoption. She then took me to the office of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Bureau of Sabata, to explain the people working there about purpose of my visit. Although I had brought a field letter from my department to support my request, another colleague, who then informed me that the letter was not specific to their office and suggested I go to their head office to obtain a letter that would allow me to access the data and support I needed. Although this was a frustrating setback, my gatekeeper advised me to directly

approach the office of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth of Oromia, which I did, eventually obtaining the letter after navigating through a great deal of bureaucracy.

Despite finally obtaining the necessary letter, the process of recruiting willing participants for my research proved to be more challenging than I had anticipated. I was told to begin the recruitment process and start fieldwork on the 17th of July. However, the experts responsible for facilitating the process were not immediately willing to recruit participants, and it took them 2-3 weeks longer than expected to complete the selection process. During this time, they also made certain demands, such as asking me to promise them daily per diem payments and to recharge their mobile phones to facilitate communication with potential participants. They also expected me to arrange transportation to and from the field site.

These demands, which I had not initially accounted for in my research budget, initially made me hesitant to move forward with the recruitment process. However, I soon realized that their reluctance to participate without additional incentives was indicative of their expectation to be compensated for their time and effort. I ultimately agreed to their demands and promised them per diem payments and transportation, in addition to inviting them to lunch during fieldwork. These changes in approach had a significant impact on the experts' willingness to participate in the research process, and they ultimately recruited around 10 willing participants for my study. This experience taught me the importance of being flexible and adaptable in my research approach and the need to account for unexpected costs and demands.

### **4.3 Sampling Techniques**

The snowball sampling technique was appropriate for this research as it allowed for the identification of study participants who have practical knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Additionally, this sampling technique is useful in cases where the target population is hard to reach and involves individuals who share similar characteristics. As an outsider researcher, it was necessary to establish a rapport with the research participants to gain their trust and cooperation (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). This was achieved through building relationships with gatekeepers who introduced me to potential participants and through maintaining open communication with participants throughout the research process.

Furthermore, it was important to recognize and address potential power imbalances and cultural differences that may have influenced the research process. This was achieved through engaging in reflexive practices and by being transparent about the researcher's background and biases (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013). The insider-outsider dynamic was an important consideration in the research process, as it influenced the selection of gatekeepers and the approach to engaging with research participants. It was important to be aware of potential biases that come with being an outsider researcher and to work towards mitigating those biases (McAreevey & Das, 2013)

In conclusion, the snowball sampling technique was appropriate for this research, as it allowed for the identification of study participants who have practical knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic. As an outsider researcher, it was important to establish rapport with participants and gatekeepers and to recognize and address potential power imbalances and cultural differences. The insider-outsider dynamic was an important consideration in the research process, influencing the selection of



gatekeepers and the approach to engaging with research participants (Amundsen et al., 2017)

#### **4.4 Background information of my study Participants**

Eight adoptive women took part in my research. The participants in my study were women between the ages of 35 and 40, who primarily identified as followers of Christianity. Most of them had one adopted child, while two respondents had both biological children and an adopted child. They lived with their spouses, and it varied among participants whether they had housemaids or not. Some of them were housewives, dedicating their time to taking care of their families and household responsibilities. There were also daily laborers among the adoptive women. There were two adoptive men, one is a business owner, and the other an office worker. Three experts from the ministry participated. One of them is a social worker the other a legal expert. The third expert is a team leader. Two police commissioner also participated and a court official also participated, as well, as a manager of a temporary residence. These participants collectively provide a diverse range of perspectives and experiences related to adoption, encompassing different genders, occupations, and roles within the adoption process.

#### **4.5 Reflexivity**

"Reflexivity is an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes"(Haynes, 2012,p.1). Reflexivity goes beyond simple reflection on the research process and outcomes, to incorporate multiple layers and levels of reflection within the research(Haynes, 2012). These would include considering the complex relationships between the production of knowledge (epistemology), the processes of knowledge production (methodology), and the involvement and impact of the knowledge producer or researcher (ontology). Reflexivity enables the research processes and outcomes to be open to change and adaptive in response to these multiple layers of reflection (Haynes, 2012).

I made a conscious effort to maintain reflexivity by avoiding the influence of my personal beliefs and understanding on the research process. I focused on leading the research in unbiased manner, while valuing the knowledge and experiences of participants. Regardless of their literacy level, age, or cultural background, I treated them with respect and recognized their contribution as equally valuable to the outcome of the research. Their perspectives and voices were given equal weight during the data collection process.

#### **4.6 Methods and Tools used**

##### **4.6.1 Participant Observation**

According to Spradley (2016), participant observation is a qualitative research method that involves immersing oneself in the study population and observing their behaviour and activities while also participating in them. The researcher becomes an active participant in the group, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the group's culture, norms, values, and practices. This method is particularly useful in social and cultural research, where the researcher seeks to understand the subjective experiences of the study population. Participant observation can identify patterns and trends in behaviour that may not be apparent through other research methods and can

lead to the development of new theories or the refinement of existing ones (Amaratunga et al., 2002). Additionally, by participating in the group's activities, researchers can develop a better understanding of the group's culture and norms, which can help establish rapport and build trust with the study population (Spradley, 2016). These benefits make participant observation a valuable research method for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the study population's behaviour and practices.

In my fieldwork, I began by visiting the office responsible for implementing the adoption process. As part of my observation, I asked questions to better understand the situation. However, I soon realized that the adoption process was highly confidential, and that I would likely face difficulties finding adopting parents who would be willing to participate in my research. One of the employees who had worked in the office for years explained to me that adopting parents viewed their adopted children as their own and would be hesitant to provide information to a stranger like me. He suggested that he could help by reaching out to willing participants on my behalf, which was a relief.

Additionally, I planned to visit the location at the industry park where abandoned children were found, which my gatekeeper promised to take me to. During my visit, I discovered that the location was chosen to increase the likelihood of the child being found by people who went to church and mosque. It was an interesting observation that highlighted the social and cultural context surrounding abandoned children.

However, I faced a setback in my plans to observe the adoptees in their homes. Despite my initial plan to visit adopting parents' homes, I discovered that they did not allow me to visit their homes. Instead, they agreed to meet with me outside of their homes, away from the child's hearing range. The reason behind this decision was to avoid any distress or confusion for the child and to maintain their privacy. While this was understandable, it also posed a challenge for my research as I was unable to observe the children.

#### **4.6.2 Key Informant Interviews**

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain description of the life world of the interviewees and to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1996). The key informant interviews were conducted with adopters, adoptees (both adults and children), the Federal First Instance Court, and the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth who are responsible for this practice. Interviews were recorded with a Dictaphone after obtaining the participants' consent and explaining the purpose and benefits of recording the interviews. Recording interviews can be beneficial for accurately capturing participants' responses and reducing the risk of missing important information (Seidman, 2006). However, it is important to obtain the participants' informed consent and address any concerns or objections they may have about recording the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). By recording the interviews, I was able to transcribe and analyse the data, leading to a rich and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

Interviews are a valuable research method for gathering in-depth information and perspectives from participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Individual interviews allow for personalized interactions between the researcher and participant, providing a safe space for participants to share their thoughts and experiences (Seidman, 2006). Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility to explore new ideas and issues not anticipated during planning, while still maintaining a structure to ensure consistency across participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

However, there can be challenges associated with conducting interviews, such as scheduling conflicts, difficulty accessing participants, and potential biases or subjective interpretations by the researcher (Seidman, 2006). In this specific project, the interviews with key informants provided valuable insights into the local conditions and perspectives related to the practice of adoption, while the individual interviews with adopters and adoptees allowed for a deeper understanding of their personal experiences with the adoption process. While conducting my study, there were difficulties that arose during field work finding space to conduct interview with all study participants excepts with those who were working in a court, ministry of women children and youth and the person working in the temporary residence place. However, overall, the use of interviews was an important tool in gathering rich and nuanced data for this research project.

### **4.6.3 Focus Group Discussion**

A focus group discussion typically involves a small group of individuals, ranging from 5-12 participants, who are chosen based on their shared characteristics or experiences related to the topic being studied (Brunger, 2009). The discussion is led by a moderator who asks open-ended questions and encourages participants to share their thoughts and experiences with one another. The goal is to gather rich and diverse data by tapping into the collective knowledge of the group (Morgan, 2002).

In this research project, the focus group discussion was conducted with 6 experts from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth who have experience working with domestic adoption in Ethiopia. The structured and interactive setting provided an opportunity for these experts to share their perspectives on the cultural benefits of domestic adoption as compared to international adoption, which was previously practiced in Ethiopia. By gathering the perspectives of multiple experts in one group, a researcher can gain a nuanced and holistic understanding of the topic being discussed.

Although focus group discussions have many benefits, there are also potential limitations. For example, it can be difficult to recruit participants who are representative of the target population, and the discussion may be influenced by the dominant voices in the group. However, these limitations can be mitigated through careful planning and moderation of the discussion (Morgan, 2002). Overall, focus group discussions are a useful tool for gathering rich and diverse data on a specific topic. In my study When the focus group discussions were conducted with participants from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, some limitations were observed. Firstly, I have noticed that there was a desirability bias, as participants felt pressured to provide socially acceptable responses rather than expressing their true opinions or experiences. Additionally, some of the two of the discussants dominated the conversation, limiting the diversity of insights gained from the discussions. Furthermore, the findings from the focus group discussions had limited generalizability due to the small sample size and specific context of the discussions, making it challenging to apply the results to a broader population.

## **4.7 Challenges Faced and Strategies used to Encounter Them**

According to the ethnologue database, Oromiffa, also known as Afaan Oromoo, is spoken by over 30 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia and belongs to the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family (Bali & Maros, 2012). In Ethiopia, it is recognized as one of the country's official languages along with Amharic, Tigrigna, and other regional languages, and it is the third most spoken language after Amharic and Tigrigna (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2008).

As a non-native speaker of Oromiffa, I faced challenges in communicating with office staff, which slowed down the process of data collection. Oromiffa has its own unique grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, which can make it difficult for non-native speakers to understand and communicate effectively. Additionally, regional dialects and variations in pronunciation can further complicate communication.

My experience with Oromiffa highlights the importance of language and cultural awareness in research. By taking the time to learn about the local language and culture, researchers can better understand and connect with the people they are studying, and ultimately improve the quality and impact of their research.

## **4.8 Methods of Data Analysis**

In this study, a qualitative approach was employed, utilizing thematic analysis/content analysis for data analysis. It is important to note that in qualitative research, data collection and analysis often occur simultaneously. Therefore, the data analysis process commenced immediately alongside data collection. Once the data collection phase was initiated, the process of transcribing and translating all the collected data began. This involved transcribing the recorded data and notes taken during key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The transcription process was initially carried out in the local language, Amharic, to accurately capture the participants' responses and perspectives. Following the transcription phase, the next step involved translating the transcribed data from Amharic into English. This translation ensured that the data could be analysed and interpreted effectively, which allowed for wider accessibility and comprehension of the findings.

The transcriptions and translations served as the foundation for the subsequent data analysis. I have carefully examined the transcribed data, word by word, to identify recurring patterns, themes, and meaningful insights. Through a systematic and iterative process, codes and categories were developed to organize and classify the data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives, and attitudes. The use of thematic analysis/content analysis in this study enabled the identification of key themes and patterns within the data, providing valuable insights into the research topic. By conducting the analysis on the field and promptly transcribing and translating the data, I was able to maintain the richness and authenticity of the participants' voices throughout the entire research process.

## **4.9 Ethical Considerations and Consent**

Overall principles of respect, dignity, justice, equality, and non-discrimination in human rights mean that research with human beings necessitates an ethical strategy (Bessell et al., 2017). I prioritized safeguarding the identities of my participants throughout the research process. To ensure ethical practices, I obtained ethical clearance from the NSD (National Research Ethics Committee) at the outset of my study. This clearance encompasses a thorough assessment of the ethical considerations, including the formulation of research questions and guides. Once I received the necessary ethical clearance mandated by the NTNU (Norwegian University of Science and Technology), I communicated to participants that the information they provide will be used solely for academic purposes and that their confidentiality will be strictly upheld. This assurance is vital to establish an environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives openly.

In addition, I emphasized that they could withdraw from the study at any time, should they wish to do so. Respecting their autonomy and ensuring voluntary participation is crucial in upholding ethical standards. To further adhere to ethical principles, I developed consent forms for different categories of research participants, such as adopters, government officials, experts working in temporary orphanages, courts, and police. These consent forms were designed to provide participants with the opportunity to specify their preferred level of involvement in the study while ensuring the protection of their confidentiality and anonymity.

Some participants initially expressed scepticism regarding the use of a Dictaphone for recording interviews. However, through open and transparent communication, I clarified the purpose and benefits of this method, assuring participants that it would enable accurate representation of their perspectives in the study. In summary, my study of domestic adoption in the Sabata region adheres to rigorous ethical practices. The process includes obtaining ethical clearance, maintaining participant confidentiality, respecting their autonomy to withdraw, and acquiring informed consent through tailored consent forms. These measures prioritized the rights and well-being of the participants, ensuring the credibility and integrity of the research findings.

Conducting a qualitative thesis entails several ethical responsibilities. Firstly, it is vital to obtain informed consent from all participants, ensuring they fully understand the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the potential risks and benefits involved. This includes clarifying the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any point without consequences. Additionally, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity is crucial in qualitative research. Participants must be assured that their identities and personal information will be protected throughout the study. This involves careful handling and storage of data, using pseudonyms or initials in place of real names, and avoiding any information that could potentially lead to their identification. Respect for participants also extends to their cultural, social, and personal contexts. It is important to consider the power dynamics between the researcher and participants, promoting a balanced and respectful relationship. The researcher should actively listen, demonstrate empathy, and ensure that participants' perspectives and experiences are accurately and authentically represented in the research findings.

Moreover, the researcher should be aware of potential biases and actively engage in reflexivity throughout the research process. This involves critically reflecting on their own values, assumptions, and biases that may influence the research design, data collection, and interpretation of findings. Transparency regarding potential conflicts of interest or personal beliefs is essential to maintain the integrity of the research. Overall, by addressing participants' concerns about the Dictaphone usage and adhering to ethical responsibilities such as informed consent, confidentiality, respect, and reflexivity, my qualitative thesis on domestic adoption in the Sabata region upholds rigorous ethical considerations. These measures protect the participants' rights, ensure the integrity of the research, and contribute to the validity and credibility of the study's findings.

# **Chapter 5: Motivation and Experiences of Adoptive Parents: Exploring the Decision to Adopt and the Journey of Adoption**

## **5 Introduction**

The practice of domestic adoption in Ethiopia is a complex and evolving process, shaped by a range of social, cultural, and legal factors. This analysis and interpretation chapter presents the factors that influence domestic adoption, the motivation of adopting parents to decide to adopt a child, and the outcomes of domestic adoption for children and families. Drawing on qualitative data collected through interviews with adoptive families and on the next chapter relying on a data collected through key informant interview and focus group discussions, experts working in the ministry of women, children, and youth, police, and courts and an individual working in a temporary residence place responsible for the adoption process, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the practice of domestic adoption in Ethiopia. Specifically, the case of Sabata, Oromia region.

The chapter begins by sharing direct quotes from study participants, which are then interpreted and contextualized with related theories and cultural and societal attitudes towards adoption, and the challenges and opportunities of domestic adoption in Ethiopia. The literature review provides a foundation for the analysis and interpretation of the study's findings, highlighting gaps in existing knowledge and the need for further research on domestic adoption in Ethiopia. Overall, this analysis and interpretation chapter aims to contribute to the understanding of the practice of domestic adoption in Ethiopia, highlighting the cultural relevance of domestic adoption for both the adopting parents and the adopted children.

## **5.1 Understanding the Motivations and Experiences of Families Involved in Domestic Adoption**

### **5.1.1 Religious Motivation**

Another respondent called Adane, who was a religious leader of a church called Medhanialem emphasized the significance of the events leading to his decision to adopt a baby. He perceived this sequence of events as a manifestation of a divine agenda or plan. According to his interpretation, the convergence of circumstances surrounding the adoption was not coincidental but rather orchestrated by a higher power. Adane's perspective reflects a belief in the presence of a guiding force that orchestrates events and aligns them with a larger purpose. He attributed his adoption decision to this divine intervention, viewing it as an indication of a predestined plan.

It is God's will that led me to this, I didn't have the motivation in prior. We were in the middle of midnight religious service that the incident occurred. It was a while ago when I was the religious leader of Medhanialem church That night we heard about a child abandoned on the gates of our church. The people who were

outside delivered us with this news since we were inside in the middle of service, Since I was the head of the church, they gave me the information. When we went outside, elderly women were bringing the child to the inside of the church. I opened my office and we sat with the women and the abandoned child. I felt joy admiring the miracle of the almighty that the baby was kept safe despite the presence of hyenas. That day was the 27<sup>th</sup> where we celebrated Medhanialem, this coincidence tempted the women to take the child home. But I was also determined to take the child to my home. I could not overlook the fact that on the grand celebration of Medhanilem, this child was found without a scratch in the middle of pitch-dark night, it was a miracle. I didn't have plans to have kids but was in awe by the miracles of the Lord.

Thus, for some Ethiopians, their religious beliefs and values may influence their decision to adopt a child as an act of kindness and charity. Adopting a child is seen to give back to the community and help those in need, which is a fundamental tenet of many religions. Additionally, many Ethiopians believe in the concept of family and the importance of caring for children, even if they are not biologically related. Thus, for some Ethiopians, adopting a child may be a natural extension of their religious beliefs and cultural values.

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, "Medhanialem" is a significant celebration that marks the establishment of the Church of Ethiopia in the 4th century AD (Engedayehu, 2013). The word "Medhanialem" translates to "Savior of the World," and this celebration is observed on the 27th day of the Ethiopian month of Tahsas, which usually falls in December or January(Engedayehu, 2013).

During the Medhanialem celebration, Orthodox Christians attend church services and participate in processions, prayers, and hymns (Chaillot, 2006). The day is considered a time of renewal, and many people use it as an opportunity to reflect on their faith and renew their commitment to living a righteous life. In Ethiopia, the Medhanialem celebration is also a time for family and community gatherings, where people come together to share meals and enjoy each other's company (Chaillot, 2006). Traditional foods like doro wat (spicy chicken stew) and injera (a spongy, sourdough flatbread) are often served, and children receive small gifts and sweets (Chaillot, 2006).

In this section, I will describe the motivations of some study participants who were inspired by their religious beliefs and spiritual experiences to consider adoption. These accounts of the respondents highlight the role of faith and spirituality in shaping their decisions to provide love and care to children in need.

One participant, Abebech, shared her experience of being inspired by a spiritual channel called Marsil TV. This channel actively promotes adoption to save children's lives, and Abebech found the ads particularly inspiring. As someone already working with children, she felt a deep resonance with the channel's message, which further motivated her to consider adoption. Her quote is illustrated as follows:

There is a spiritual channel called Marsil TV where audiences are encouraged to take children through adoption., They have such an inspiring ad on how adoption saves children's lives. Since I also work on children, the ads motivated me. Said Abebech.

Based on the provided text, it appears that Abebech was inspired by the spiritual channel Marsil TV to consider adoption as a way of helping children in need. The channel's

message about the transformative power of adoption and the impact it can have on children's lives resonated with Abebech's own work and interests in helping children.

From a religious perspective, this can be seen as an expression of the belief in the value and sanctity of human life, and a call to action to care for the vulnerable members of society. The message of the TV channel, which encourages adoption as a way of providing love, care, and support to children who might otherwise be left without it, can be seen as embodying the values of compassion and selflessness that are central to many religious teachings.

In addition, the fact that Abebech was motivated by the message of the TV channel can be seen as an example of how faith-based media can serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for individuals in their personal and professional lives. The channel's message about the importance of helping children in need can be seen as a reflection of the belief in the power of faith and community to effect positive change in the world, and the importance of working together to create a better future for all. Overall, this story highlights the importance of faith, compassion, and community in shaping our actions and guiding us towards a life of meaning and purpose. From her account, it could be said that motivation for some of study respondents to decide to adopt a child is spiritual, that encourages adoption to save children's lives. The fact that this channel is spiritual may have played a role in motivating the respondent, especially since they have a religious background or connection to spirituality, In the case of Ethiopians, religion is a significant part of the culture and daily life for many people.

For another respondent of my research called Haymanot, the decision to adopt was deeply rooted in her religious faith. She expressed that her beliefs and values prompted her to consider adoption to fulfil her spiritual calling and demonstrate compassion and love for a child in need. In her view, adoption was not merely a personal desire or a practical solution but a sacred act of service and a reflection of her religious commitment.

It was on Meskerem 2014E.C. that I was able to adopt. Marsil TV played a role in initiating this concept of helping children, to keep them safe and out of streets. They encourage Ethiopians to rescue children. Hearing all the testimonies from the mothers who adopted children, gives you fuel to also do the same.

Based on the provided text, it appears that Marsil TV is a religious TV channel that has played a role in encouraging Ethiopians to help children in need, including through adoption. From a religious perspective, this can be seen as an expression of the belief in the value and sanctity of human life, and a call to action to care for the vulnerable members of society.

In many religious traditions, the protection and care of children is seen as a sacred duty, and adoption can be seen as a way of embodying this duty and fulfilling one's spiritual obligations. In addition, the act of adopting a child can be seen as a reflection of the values of compassion and selflessness, which are central to many religious teachings.

The testimonies of other mothers who have adopted children can also be seen as a source of inspiration and encouragement, as they demonstrate the positive impact that adoption can have on both the child and the adoptive family. This can be seen as a reflection of the belief in the power of faith and community to effect positive change in the world, and the importance of working together to create a better future for all.



### **5.1.2 Infertility as a motivating factor to decide to Adopt a Child**

Another key informant interviewee called Kassech expressed that her motivation to adopt was initiated as follows,

I don't know why I couldn't give birth.....To be honest, I just wanted a child. I didn't mind whether it's a boy or a girl, just wanted to have children. My husband also had the same attitude. He accepted my decision to adopt the boy and the girl. He has special attachment especially with the girl. He really cares for her.

Same as the above, another participant of my study Bontu explained her motivation to adopt a child as follows.

I do not have my own child but since I am being frank with you, I never complained to God about not having a child. I plead with him but never complain. When I pray, I never made it my case to have my own. I just plead for a child either through adoption or biologically. As I told you I'm married and truthfully, I had personal health issues. I could not get pregnant I have not tried other means, just the normal (natural) one. It was not successful. There is a path that God prepared, it is written for me to have a child this way. I don't fight with destiny.....

From those person's account, it can be inferred that, having children is still highly valued in Ethiopian culture, as evidenced by their desire to have a child and their willingness to explore both biological and adoptive options. Additionally, their acceptance of the will of the Lord and the path that God has prepared for them could suggest a cultural emphasis on faith and trust in a higher power. It is also notable that the person did not express a preference for the gender of the child, which could indicate a more egalitarian view towards gender in Ethiopian culture. Finally, the fact that the person's husband had a special attachment to their adopted daughter suggests that adoption is becoming more accepted and normalized in Ethiopia as a means of building a family.

Life can be unpredictable and often throws unexpected challenges our way. For some, the challenge is in starting a family. For others, it may be in losing a loved one or battling a serious illness. In the case of Ayantu who is one of my informant interviewees, all these challenges presented themselves at once. Despite her initial uncertainty about adopting a child, fate seemed to have a different plan in store. A health scare and the loss of her husband left her unable to conceive, but ultimately led her to the decision to keep the child she had come to call her own. This is a story of resilience and the unexpected twists and turns that life can take, and she had explained this situation as follow,

I didn't have children, but I could not make up my mind to adopt one. But God blessed me with this. I saw it as a sign, so I kept him. I had tumour and had an operation. My husband died due to an accident. Because of all that and my age, I couldn't give birth. It's difficult to give birth once you reach a certain age.

This quote appears to be from a person who did not have children and was initially undecided about adoption but then ended up keeping a child who came into their life unexpectedly. The person attributes the arrival of the child as a blessing from God and interpreted it as a sign to keep the child. The person's decision to keep the child may have been influenced by various life events such as a tumour operation and the death of her husband due to an accident. The person also mentions their age and the difficulty of

giving birth at a certain age as a reason why adoption may have been a more feasible option for them.

### **5.1.3 Discovering the Joy of Motherhood: Finding Purpose and Fulfilment in Raising a Child**

There were also 2 respondents called Frezer and Genet whose motivation to adopt a child was a coincidence and seemed that they decide to adopt to find purpose and fulfilment in raising a child in other ways, the love they have for a child made them add those abandon children to their families. Frezer explain the incidence as follows.

“I love children, that is why I opted for adoption. My biological child died; I didn't try much after that. Consequently, I adopted a little girl who now just turned two years old. I really wanted to adopt a girl, didn't mind the age. Just like what I wanted, I got a daughter. It has been two years since I adopted her. I feel overjoyed when I think about her. Joy is only what I feel.”

In this statement, Frezer who was one of my key informant interviewees expresses her love for children and explains that she opted for adoption because her biological child had passed away. she said that they didn't try to have another biological child after that, but instead chose to adopt a little girl. She and her husband preferred adopting a girl, but they didn't mind the age. They adopted a two-year-old girl and feel overjoyed when they think about her. Frezer expressed the deep love that they have for their adopted daughter. The adoption has brought them a lot of joy and happiness. The person's decision to adopt a child after the loss of their biological child is not uncommon. Many people who experience the loss of a child choose to adopt to build their family and provide a loving home for a child in need.

While Genet explained the situation that led her to adopt as follows

“I found him on the streets abandoned. He was found around a river. A cousin of mine went out for to pee and found the baby abandoned outside early in the morning. He only had flannel on him. He could be 7 days old. We then took him to the police. The police registered him and sent us to women affairs. I cleaned him up and took him to a hospital. He was in good condition. I bought him clothes and a bottle. I started raising him right then. Once the police sent us to Women and Children affairs, they registered him.”

In this statement, the person describes finding a baby abandoned on the streets. She explained that the baby was only a few days old and had been left outside with just a flannel to keep him warm. The person and their cousin took the baby to the police, who then directed them to Women and Children affairs. The baby was registered, and the person took the baby to a hospital where they were found to be in good condition.

she then began to raise the baby, buying clothes and a bottle to care for him. The decision to take in an abandoned child is a selfless act of kindness, and from this statement, one could see a big heart and a strong desire to care for others.

In both cases, the decision to adopt was motivated by a desire to have a loving home and a desire to have a child. The first person chose adoption after experiencing the loss of a biological child, while the second person found a baby abandoned on the streets and chose to take them in. Both statements demonstrate the love, care, and compassion that are necessary when adopting a child.

Both statements also touch on the topic of motherhood. In the first statement, Frezer who has adopted the little girl is now a mother figure to her. Although the child is not biologically related, the person has taken on the role of caregiver and nurturer, providing love and support to the child as any mother would. This shows that motherhood can come in many different forms and does not necessarily require a biological connection to the child.

In Ethiopian domestic adoption process and practice, there is often a culture of secrecy and privacy around adoption. This is partly due to the social stigma that can be attached to adoption, as it is sometimes seen as a last resort for couples who are unable to conceive naturally. In addition, there may be cultural beliefs and values that emphasize the importance of biological kinship and discourage non-related individuals from assuming the role of parent.

As a result, families who adopt a child may feel a sense of shame or embarrassment and may not want others to know about their adoption. This can include keeping the adoption a secret from the child themselves, as well as from their extended family, neighbours, and community. Families may worry that if the adoption is known, the child could be treated differently or face discrimination from others. In addition to their neighbours, some families may choose not to tell their child that they are adopted, at least until they reach a certain age, such as 18. This is often done with the intention of allowing the child to grow up feeling a sense of belonging and attachment to their adoptive family, without feeling like an outsider or different from their peers.

One of my Key informant interviewees gave her account on this issue as follows.

I don't want to disclose that she is adopted. My family thinks that she is my biological daughter. It's not something I even remember. I forget she is adopted, think of her as my own flesh. My family asked me about this, but I told them, I gave birth to her. They didn't dig further about the hospital where I gave birth or anything. They accepted it and flocked to see me.

Similarly, in the second statement, the person who found the abandoned baby took on the responsibility of caring for the child as if they were their own. This person is also acting as a mother figure, providing the baby with care and attention they need to thrive. This demonstrates that motherhood can be a selfless act of caring for another person, regardless of biological ties. Both statements highlight the importance of maternal instincts and the desire to care for a child in need. It shows that motherhood is not just about biology, but also about the emotional connection and love that develops between a caregiver and child.

Another key informant interviewee called Etsegenet tell the story that made her adopt a child as follows, she grew up witnessing her parents help underprivileged children in her community. Despite the lack of regulation in the adoption system at the time, her parents took in six or seven children, providing them with education and support until they were able to make lives for themselves. Years later, after living abroad with her husband, the woman and her sister decided to adopt children of their own. The feeling of becoming a mother through adoption was exquisite and she plans to continue to adopt with God's will. She encourages others to consider adoption as a means of doing good in the world.

My parents bestowed up on me this tradition. I grew up witnessing this. My own conscience also obliged me to do this. When they see people on the streets, my

parents take in 6 or 7 children (fed and schooled). Some of the children grew up to have their own family and some graduated with a college degree. We grew up together. It's not adoption per say but they help the underprivileged. The adoption system developed profoundly these days, back then it was not well regulated. I think the media played a role in mainstreaming the concept of adoption. In those days, my parents helped underprivileged children until the children made life for themselves. I lived abroad for a couple of years with my husband. This has been my interest for a long time. We had a discussion with my younger sister and decided to adopt. We adopted our children on the same day. Women in Ethiopian and all over the world share my sentiment when I finally adopted a child. The feeling is exquisite. Only God and I know how I felt that day. Mothers also share my feelings. Now, I am a mother. I think anyone who hears me will comprehend how I felt. Giving birth is just a mere terminology. The maternity feeling is what counts. It gives you pleasure beyond belief. It creates something gigantic within you. I will not be limited with just one child. I will continue with the adoption, God willing. It's pleasing. God also encourages us to do so. Why not only raise one child, two or three is preferable. Of course, I don't want to pressure people into adoption; however, with God's will, I hope all Ethiopians think about this good will.

The account of above respondents could be seen from the lens of social constructionism of motherhood theories, The social construction of motherhood is a concept that challenges the traditional notion that motherhood is solely based on biological ties (Glenn, 2016). The role of motherhood is not inherent or biological, but rather a social construct that is shaped by cultural, historical, and societal factors (Huopainen & Satama, 2019). The two statements discussed demonstrate how the social construct of motherhood can be redefined and expanded beyond the traditional biological definition.

In the first statement, the person who adopted the little girl challenges the idea that motherhood must be tied to biological connection. They demonstrate that motherhood can be a chosen role and a loving relationship that develops through caregiving, rather than simply a biological fact. This challenges the traditional societal norms that define motherhood only in terms of biological ties and suggests that motherhood is a role that can be chosen and fulfilled by anyone who provides care and love to a child.

Similarly, in the second statement, the person who found and cared for the abandoned baby challenges the idea that motherhood must be tied to pregnancy and childbirth. This person demonstrates that motherhood can be a selfless act of caring for another person, regardless of biological ties. By providing care and attention to the baby, they are fulfilling the role of mother, challenging the traditional societal norms that define motherhood only in terms of biological reproduction.

## **5.2 Experience and Cultural Rituals practiced after adopting a child**

After adopting a child, many families around the world celebrate with different cultural rituals and traditions.

Celebrations and baby mooning after adopting a child can vary depending on the family and their cultural traditions. In some cases, families may choose to have a formal adoption celebration or a welcome home party to introduce the child to family and

friends. This could involve decorations, gifts, and food to celebrate the new addition to the family.

Baby mooning, which refers to a period of relaxation and bonding between new parents and their new-born, can also be a meaningful time for adoptive families. Although adoptive parents do not typically experience the physical recovery from childbirth, they may still choose to take time off work or plan a special trip or vacation to bond with their new child.

Everything was prepared when I first received the baby people were coming to us congratulating us for having a baby. Traditional customaries such as porridge was prepared for our guest's enjoyment. I feel like I have given birth. I don't feel like I have missed out on anything. I have experienced the same sentiments as a new mom who gave birth naturally. When women give birth people bring gifts, children's clothing, and I felt good when it comes to that. It was overwhelming. I am happy with the baby I took. I have no words to explain how I feel when it comes to my baby.

A person called Alem also explained about the celebration as follows.

I spent days at home on a babymoon as if I gave birth to a new-born baby. I went to the same process of a mother who gave birth biologically. For her christening, we threw a huge party. Of course, giving birth biologically and adopting isn't the same; but we do what we can. I paid a huge price to get her.

In some cases, adoptive parents may also choose to have a "gotcha day" celebration to mark the day that the child officially became a part of their family. This could involve special activities, outings, or a family trip to celebrate the occasion.

Overall, the way in which adoptive families celebrate and baby moon will vary depending on their individual preferences and cultural traditions. The most important thing is that families take the time to bond with their new child and create meaningful memories together.

## **5.3 Discussion**

### **5.3.1 Social constructionism of Motherhood**

Overall, from the accounts given by key informant interviewees of my research, their statements challenge the traditional societal norms of motherhood and demonstrate how the social construct of motherhood can be redefined and expanded beyond the traditional biological definition. They show that motherhood is not just about biology, but also about the emotional connection and love that develops between a caregiver and child (Benedek, 1959).

In Ethiopia, like in many other societies, motherhood is deeply entrenched in cultural and religious expectations. Women are often expected to marry and have children, and the ability to bear children is considered a significant aspect of womanhood (Glenn, 2016). Additionally, poverty and a lack of access to education and healthcare can limit women's options and reinforce traditional gender roles, including that of motherhood (Glenn, 2016).

Religion also plays a significant role in shaping societal expectations of motherhood in Ethiopia. Christianity and Islam are the dominant religions, both of which place a high value on motherhood and the family unit (Mahoney, 2010). The concept of motherhood

is closely linked to religious beliefs, and motherhood is often viewed as a divine duty that women are expected to fulfil (Mahoney, 2010).

Despite these traditional expectations, there is a growing movement in Ethiopia that challenges the narrow definition of motherhood and emphasizes the importance of nurturing and caring for children, regardless of biological ties. Many women, like the one mentioned in the one account given by key informant interviewee, are choosing to adopt children and expand their families beyond traditional biological ties.

In conclusion, the social construct of motherhood in Ethiopia is influenced by a combination of cultural, religious, and economic factors. While traditional expectations still play a significant role, there is a growing recognition that the role of a mother is not limited to biological ties. This shifting perspective on motherhood is reflective of a larger societal shift towards more inclusive and diverse definitions of family and parenting.

Berger and Luckmann's (as cited in, Burr & Dick, 2017) stated that; account of social life argues that human beings together create and then sustain all social phenomena through social practices. They further stated that, how the world can be socially constructed by the social practices of people but at the same time experienced by them as if the nature of their world is pre-given and fixed. Hence, Child adoption is becoming increasingly important in Ethiopia due to the cultural and social significance of having children. In Ethiopian society, having children is highly valued and is often seen as a sign of fertility, virility, and prosperity. Child adoption provides a means for couples who are struggling with infertility or for those who desire to have more children to achieve these cultural expectations (Whiteford & Gonzalez, 1995). As a result, child adoption is seen as a way of fulfilling personal, social, and cultural obligations, and has become an important means of ensuring social continuity and maintaining family ties in Ethiopian society (Whiteford & Gonzalez, 1995).

### **5.3.2 Theory of social stigma and motherhood**

Stigma theory, as originally conceptualized by sociologist Erving Goffman in his 1963 book "Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity," suggests that individuals who deviate from societal norms or expectations can face negative social consequences such as discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion (Goffman, 1963). In the case of infertility, pronatalist norms dictate that women should be able to conceive and bear children, and failure to do so can result in social stigmatization.

Culley et al. (2013), conducted a qualitative study exploring the experiences of infertility among women in the United Kingdom. The study found that many women felt a sense of shame and guilt for their inability to conceive, which was often reinforced by societal expectations and pronatalist norms. The women in the study also reported facing criticism and judgment from their families, friends, and peers, which can exacerbate feelings of isolation and psychological distress (Culley et al., 2013).

Social settings have predetermined contexts for which specific traits are considered normative, and people are categorized accordingly. First impressions allow people to anticipate and classify others into socially defined categories that are instilled in everyone's mind through interactions with others. The situation of adopting parents in Ethiopia can be seen as either failing to adhere to the expected normative traits of society and being stigmatized or fulfilling the expectation of the norms by adopting a child. Fertility-specific distress may also be derived from the importance that individuals place on becoming a parent. Many women see motherhood as an important personal life

goal and believe that the dream of motherhood is best realized through biological reproduction.

One respondent mentioned that, due to her inability to give birth, she was experiencing a sense of shame or guilt for not being able to fulfil her role as a woman and a mother, leading to psychological distress and feelings of isolation. Additionally, another respondent also mentioned that she was facing criticism or judgment from both her family and her husband family and peers, who may perceive their infertility as a personal failure or a sign of weakness, as it was perceived their own reluctance made them not to have a baby.

Another study by Greil et al. (2010), examined the social consequences of infertility among women in the United States. The study found that infertility was associated with social isolation, negative self-image, and feelings of failure and inadequacy. The women in the study reported experiencing pressure from family and friends to have children and feeling excluded from social events and gatherings where children were present (Greil et al., 2010)

Research has also found that infertility can lead to marital conflict and strain. For example, Welsh and Peterson (2014), conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining the impact of infertility on marital relationships. The analysis found that infertility was associated with increased marital distress and decreased marital satisfaction, which can further exacerbate the negative emotional consequences of infertility.

The idea of stigma that an infertile woman faces is also discussed by Cousineau & Domar, 2007; McQuillan et al., as cited in (Avila, 2016); when a woman is unable to fulfil pronatalist social norms, she may experience great agony because of the related social stigma from her surroundings due to her infertility; which leads to secrecy of the condition and withdrawal from social gatherings and decide to find medical remedy without the fear of the potential effect on the body and mental wellbeing. Though, some women do not desire to have children, they would anyway experience social criticism of failing to fulfil the norms of biological reproduction. They are viewed as uncaring and selfish by pronatalist societies who highly encourage marriage couples to have a child (Mcquillan et al., 2012, as cited in(Avila, 2016).

In conclusion, stigma theory provides a useful framework for understanding the social and emotional challenges faced by infertile women in communities where pronatalist norms are emphasized. The stigmatization of infertility can lead to psychological distress, isolation, and feelings of shame and guilt, which can have a profound impact on well-being and sense of belonging. It is important for society to recognize the harmful effects of stigmatization and to provide support and understanding for those who are experiencing infertility.

# **Chapter 6: Policy and Legislation on Domestic Adoption in Ethiopia: Insights from experts working in the Ministry of Women Children and Youth, Police, and Court of Sabata, Ethiopia**

## **6 Introduction**

The practice of domestic adoption in Ethiopia is a multifaceted process that is influenced by various social, cultural, and legal factors. This analysis and interpretation chapter aims to shed light on these factors by presenting the accounts of key informants, including experts from the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, as well as individuals working in the police and courts.

Drawing on qualitative data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussion, including two police officers, one court official, and three experts from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, this chapter aims to explore the factors that shape the domestic adoption process in Ethiopia, from the point of view of study participants.

Through the qualitative data collected via key informant interviews and focus group discussions, this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the roles and contributions of key players such as the police, court officials, and experts from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth in the practice of domestic adoption in Ethiopia. The insights gathered from these key informants will help to inform policies and practices related to domestic adoption in Ethiopia and other countries with similar contexts, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of this complex and evolving practice.

### **6.1 Eligibility Criteria to Adopt a child Domestically**

In Ethiopia and in sabata region, there are several legal requirements that adoptive parents must fulfil to be eligible to adopt a child. These requirements are intended to ensure that the adoption is in the best interest of the child and that the adoptive parents can provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child. Some of the requirements that the court may require adoptive parents to fulfil include some of the requirements stated in the picture taken by me when visiting the temporary residence place of children around sabata.





Figure 2: A picture taken from foster care called Tursistu Daimani of Sabata zone.

The Image above describes that, the requirements for adoptive parents in temporary residential care convey a sense of the seriousness and responsibility associated with parenting. These requirements indicate that adoptive parents should possess the maturity and life experience necessary to provide a stable and nurturing environment for the child. The emphasis on marital status underscores the significance of a committed family unit in raising a child. The health requirement highlights the expectation that adoptive parents should be physically and mentally fit to adequately care for the child. The financial stability requirement recognizes the financial resources needed to support a child's upbringing. The criminal background check ensures the child's safety by screening for any history of criminal activity. The home study requirement ensures that the child will be placed in a secure and nurturing environment. By evaluating the adoptive parents' living situation and their ability to provide for the child's needs, this requirement emphasizes the child's well-being and safety.

Overall, these requirements reflect the belief that parenting is a profound responsibility, demanding maturity, stability, and sufficient resources. They underscore the importance of a committed and stable family unit, the child's safety and well-being, and the adoptive parents' ability to meet the child's needs.

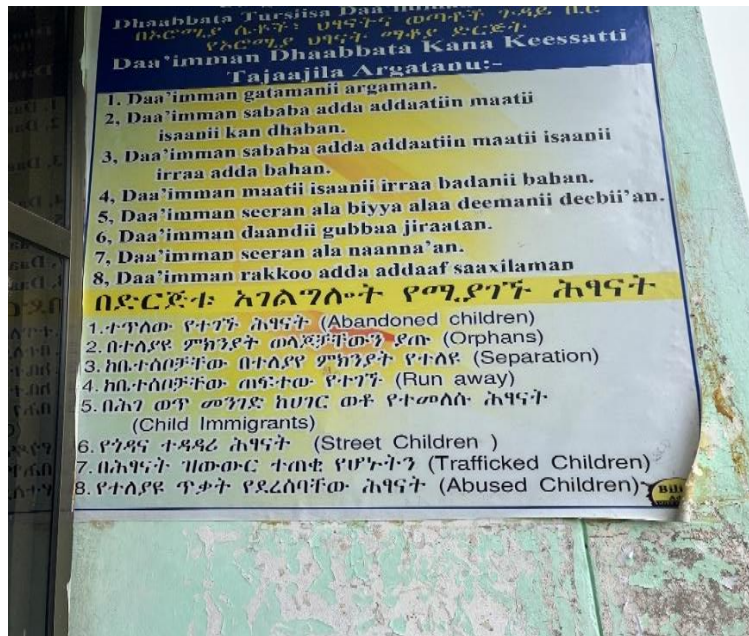


Figure 3: Picture taken from the foster care of sabata called (Tursistu Daimani of Sabata zone)

The above picture depicts that, eligible Children who lives in the foster care are those who are unable to live with their biological parents due to abandonment, neglect, abuse, or other reasons like run away child’s, children who are separated from their parents for different reasons, trafficked children and abused children.

### 6.2 Insights of Experts working in the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth

The chapter below are divided into different section; the first section presents the insights of experts working in the ministry of women children and youth, while the second subtitle is about why domestic adoption is preferred than other forms of adoption, and then about difficulties encountered in the process of placing children with adopting parents.

One of my key informants called Abebe who was working in the ministry of women children and youth give his account as follows, he said he was working as a legal expert in the office of ministry of women children and youth for 4 years now.

As an individual working in the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth of Sabata, I can say that our organization plays a crucial role in the practice of domestic adoption in Ethiopia. We are responsible for developing policies, guidelines, and regulations that govern the domestic adoption process. Our organization also works closely with other government agencies, non-

governmental organizations, and adoption service providers to ensure that the adoption process is conducted in a safe, ethical, and transparent manner. In addition to developing policies and guidelines, our organization is responsible for monitoring and regulating the activities of adoption service providers and ensuring that they are following the law. We also provide support and guidance to adoptive families throughout the adoption process and work to ensure that children are placed in safe, loving, and stable homes. Overall, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth is committed to promoting the best interests of children and ensuring that the practice of domestic adoption in Ethiopia is conducted in a manner that safeguards the rights and welfare of children, birth parents, and adoptive families.

He stated that the criteria that must be fulfilled for adopting a child in Ethiopia are outlined, emphasizing the requirements that prospective adoptive parents must meet. These requirements include age, health, ability to provide a stable home and financial support, and a clean criminal record. By outlining these criteria, he highlights the importance of ensuring that children are placed in safe and stable homes with suitable parents who can provide the necessary care and support. He also highlights the significance of the legal process of adoption in Ethiopia, which aims to protect the welfare of children and ensure that they are placed in loving and caring families. His direct account can be read below,

The criteria for adopting a child in Ethiopia include being at least 25 years old and at least 15 years older than the child being adopted, having good physical and mental health, and being able to provide a stable and loving home for the child. Additionally, the adoptive parents must be able to provide financial support for the child and must have a clean criminal record.

The criteria for adopting a child in Ethiopia aim to ensure that children are placed in safe and stable homes with suitable parents who can provide the necessary care and support. The age requirement of being at least 25 years old and at least 15 years older than the child being adopted ensures that prospective adoptive parents have had enough life experience to handle the responsibilities of parenting. The requirement for good physical and mental health ensures that adoptive parents can provide adequate care for the child. Additionally, the requirement of providing a stable and loving home for the child is crucial as it ensures that the child is placed in an environment that will support their overall well-being, while the requirement for financial support ensures that the child's basic needs are met and that they have access to education and other resources and the requirement of a clean criminal record ensures that the child is not placed in a potentially unsafe environment. In a nutshell, the adoption criteria in Ethiopia prioritize the welfare of the child and aim to ensure that they are placed in loving and supportive homes.

### **6.2.1 Why domestic Adoption?**

Abebe who was one of my key informant interviewees explained that domestic adoption provides several advantages over other forms of adoption, such as international adoption or foster care. The respondent highlighted three main benefits of domestic adoption: cultural preservation, faster adoption process, and lower costs. By allowing children to remain in their own country, culture, and community, domestic adoption enables them to maintain a sense of identity and belonging and may also provide access to birth families. Additionally, the domestic adoption process tends to be quicker and less expensive than

international adoption, which can be beneficial for both children and families. The respondent's account suggests that domestic adoption can be a positive option for children and families seeking to adopt, particularly for those who prioritize cultural connections and affordability.

Firstly, domestic adoption allows children to remain in their own country, culture, and community. This can be very beneficial for children as they are able to maintain a sense of identity and belonging. Firstly, domestic adoption is often a quicker process than international adoption or foster care. This means that children can move into permanent homes more quickly, which can be very beneficial for their development and overall well-being. In addition to this, domestic adoption is often less expensive than international adoption, as it does not involve the same level of legal and travel expenses. This can make adoption more accessible for families who may not have the financial resources to pursue international adoption. Thus, domestic adoption can be a very positive option for children and families, as it allows children to stay within their own culture and community, provides a quicker process for adoption, and is often more affordable than other forms of adoption.

This view of the respondent could be used as indication to support the argument that domestic adoption should be promoted as a preferred form of adoption over international adoption or foster care, particularly for families who value maintaining cultural connections and may have limited financial resources.

One of the group discussants of the ministry's office called Yeshinesh who said was working with the position of social worker, highlighted the benefits of Ethiopia's ban on international adoption with a particular focus on the preservation of children's cultural identities and the reduction of trauma associated with being separated from their birth families and cultures. The account emphasizes the historical issue of international adoption, which often resulted in children being placed in foreign countries and experiencing difficulties in adjusting to new cultures, languages, and traditions. By promoting domestic adoption, Ethiopia's ban has helped to address these issues and ensure that children are able to maintain their connections to their communities and cultural heritage. The ban has also helped to prioritize the welfare of children by ensuring that they are placed in homes where they can receive the necessary care and support within a familiar environment. Overall, her account emphasizes the significance of Ethiopia's ban on international adoption and the positive impact it has had on the lives of Ethiopian children. She underscores the importance of prioritizing the welfare and cultural identity of children in adoption practices, her direct account is stated below,

The ban has helped to preserve Ethiopian children's cultural identity and reduce the trauma associated with being separated from their birth families and culture. In the past, international adoption often resulted in children being adopted by families from foreign countries, where they may face difficulties adjusting to new cultures, languages, and traditions. The ban has helped to address this issue by promoting domestic adoption, which allows children to stay within their own communities and maintain their cultural identities.

While majority of the discussants share the view that the ban of international adoption in Ethiopia has had both positive and negative effects on the adoption process. On one hand, the ban has helped to prevent child trafficking and exploitation, as well as preserve the cultural identities of Ethiopian children. Domestic adoption also provides a

quicker and more affordable adoption process for families. However, the ban has also limited the number of potential adoptive families, especially for children with special needs or medical conditions. Additionally, there is a risk that some children may be left without permanent homes due to the lack of domestic adoptive families. Therefore, it is crucial for the government to address the challenges faced by domestic adoption, such as the lack of awareness and stigma surrounding adoption, and to promote domestic adoption as a viable option for families looking to adopt.

One of the group discussants was called Samuel, 36 years old and who joined the ministry office seven years ago reflected that,

The ban on international adoption in Ethiopia is a necessary measure to safeguard the best interests of Ethiopian children and promote ethical adoption practices. He also emphasized that the ban on international adoption in Ethiopia plays an important role in promoting and preserving the cultural identity and values of Ethiopian children by prohibiting their adoption by foreign families, as the ban ensures that these children can grow up within their own communities and learn about their own culture, traditions, and values. This is essential for the healthy development of a child's sense of identity and belonging, as well as their overall well-being. By being raised within their own culture and community, children can develop a strong connection to their roots and a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. In this way, the ban on international adoption in Ethiopia can be seen as a positive step towards ensuring that children learn and appreciate their culture and values. He further states that, the decision to ban international adoption was made in response to concerns over corruption, child trafficking, and the exploitation of vulnerable children. Overall, the ban on international adoption in Ethiopia is a necessary measure to safeguard the best interests of Ethiopian children and to promote ethical adoption practices.

### **6.2.2 Difficulties Encountered in the Process of Placing Children with Adoptive Parents**

Three of the group discussants from the ministry of women children and youth recognized that several challenges may arise when giving a child to adopting parents. One of the most dominant challenges mentioned on the discussion was ensuring that the child is being placed in a safe and nurturing environment. They said that this process requires thorough background checks and studies to be conducted on potential adopting parents to ensure that they can provide a stable and supportive home environment. Another challenge mentioned that may arise is maintaining contact with the birth family or ensuring that the child is able to maintain a connection to their culture and community, where they said that this can be particularly challenging in cases where the child is being adopted by parents from a different cultural or ethnic background, which was the case before the ban of international adoption.

Another challenge mentioned was that there may be legal challenges that need to be addressed, such as ensuring that all necessary paperwork and documentation is completed correctly, and that the adoption process complies with local laws and regulations. Lastly, there may be emotional challenges that arise for both the child and the adopting parents.

Thorough background checks, home studies, and adequate support and resources are important in addressing these challenges.

### 6.3 Insights from Police

According to one of the key informant interviews of my research called commissioner Bishaw, who was responsible for routine patrols of abandonment, explained that,

In Ethiopia, abandoned children are often found in high-risk areas such as public places like streets, markets, and transportation hubs, which are located near mosques and churches. These areas may be seen as target areas for birth parents who hope that people passing by will easily see the abandoned children. As a result, our officers play a critical role in identifying and responding to cases of child abandonment in these areas.

when reports of abandoned children are received or during routine patrols, police officers in the sabata area take the child into protective custody and bring them to a police station for further processing. The child's information, such as their name and any identifying details, will be recorded and shared with child welfare authorities like the Ministry of Women Children and Youth in Sabata. we work closely with the child welfare authorities to ensure that abandoned children receive appropriate care and services. The child will be transported to a designated child welfare facility or temporary shelter called Tursistu Daimani (Foster home) around Sabata area, where they can receive medical attention, food, and shelter. The child welfare authorities will then coordinate with the police to ensure that the child is placed in an appropriate long-term care setting, such as a foster home or adoption agency. It is important to note that child abandonment is a serious issue in Ethiopia, particularly in the Sabata area, where many women from the countryside come to find work in the industry zone. These women often live with random partners and are prone to unprotected sex, which can lead to unwanted pregnancy and ultimately, child abandonment. Through our work, police officers in Sabata can ensure that abandoned children receive the care and protection they need to thrive, and that those responsible for child abandonment are held accountable for their actions.

From the above account of my respondent, it could be said that child abandonment is a serious issue in Sabata area, with many children being left in public places due to poverty, social stigma, when an abandoned child is discovered, police officers play a critical role in responding quickly and effectively to ensure the child's safety and well-being. They are trained to recognize and respond to a wide range of physical conditions in abandoned children, and work closely with child welfare authorities to ensure that they receive appropriate care and services.

Another respondent of my research called commissioner ketema explained the situation on how they do routine patrols and the physical situations of abandoned children,

We may intentionally patrol high-risk areas to identify abandoned children, but we may also come across abandoned children accidentally during routine patrols or in response to reports from concerned citizens. The circumstances surrounding the discovery of an abandoned child may vary widely, but it is important to note that we are always on the lookout for signs of child abandonment and are trained to respond quickly and effectively in such situations. When an abandoned child is found, their physical condition may vary widely depending on the circumstances of their abandonment. Some abandoned children may be found in relatively good health, while others may be suffering from malnutrition, dehydration, or exposure

to the elements. In some cases, abandoned children may be suffering from injuries or illnesses that require immediate medical attention. Police officers in sabata area are trained to recognize and respond to a wide range of physical conditions in abandoned children. We are trained to provide basic first aid and emergency care as needed, and to transport children to medical facilities for further evaluation and treatment. In addition, we work closely with child welfare authorities to ensure that abandoned children receive appropriate care and services, including medical care, food, shelter, and access to education and other social services.

Based on the provided account, it seems that the police officers in Sabata area are trained to identify and respond to instances of child abandonment. They may come across abandoned children during routine patrols or in response to reports from concerned citizens. The physical condition of these children may vary widely, and officers are trained to recognize and respond to a range of conditions, including providing basic first aid and emergency care when needed. They work closely with child welfare authorities to ensure that these children receive appropriate care and services. Overall, the account suggests that the police officers in Sabata area take the issue of child abandonment seriously and are well-equipped to respond to such situations.

#### **6.4 Insights from experts working at Mana Murtii Aanaa Magaala Sabbataa (District Court of the City of Sabata)**

In Ethiopia, the courts play an important role in the adoption process. A key informant of my research called Chala who is in the age of 40 explained that the responsibility of the courts is to ensure that the adoption is in the best interest of the child and that all legal requirements are met. He further stated that,

Some specific responsibilities of the courts in the adoption process in Ethiopia includes Approval of the adoption petition which includes that, the adoptive parents must file a petition with the court to adopt a child. The court reviews the petition to ensure that it meets all legal requirements and is in the best interest of the child. If the court approves the petition, it issues an adoption order. In some cases, the court may appoint a guardian to represent the interests of the child in the adoption proceedings. The guardian is responsible for ensuring that the child's interests are protected, and that the adoption is in the best interest of the child, most times those guardians are people who work in the ministry of women children and youth.

The court may order an investigation of the adoptive parents to ensure that they are suitable to adopt a child. The investigation may include a home study, criminal background checks, and interviews with the adoptive parents. Issuance of an adoption decree: Once the court is satisfied that all legal requirements have been met and that the adoption is in the best interest of the child, it issues an adoption decree; The decree legally transfers custody and guardianship of the child from the birth parents to the adoptive parents. Overall, the courts in Ethiopia and specifically in sabta region play a crucial role in ensuring that adoptions are carried out in a legal and ethical manner and that the best interests of the child are protected.

Chala further stated that,

As a person working in a court responsible for facilitating domestic adoption, "I can say that ensuring the best interest of the child is always our top priority before any adoption process takes place. We have a rigorous screening process in place to ensure that prospective adoptive parents meet certain criteria and can provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child and this screening process includes background checks, home visits, and interviews with the prospective parents, as well as a thorough evaluation of their financial stability and parenting abilities. We also work closely with child welfare authorities to ensure that the child's needs are being met throughout the adoption process.

I asked him about his opinion on the ban of international adoption and he replied,

As a person working in a court responsible for facilitating domestic adoption, I can say that ensuring the best interest of the child is always our top priority before any adoption process takes place. We have a rigorous screening process in place to ensure that prospective adoptive parents meet certain criteria and can provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child. This screening process includes background checks, home visits, and interviews with the prospective parents, as well as a thorough evaluation of their financial stability and parenting abilities. We also work closely with child welfare authorities to ensure that the child's needs are being met throughout the adoption process. In terms of the replacement of international adoption by domestic adoption, I believe that domestic adoption can be a positive alternative for children who need a loving and permanent home. It allows children to remain within their own culture and community, which can be important for their development and well-being. Domestic adoption also promotes family preservation and reunification efforts, which can be beneficial for both the child and birth family. However, it is important to note that international adoption may still be a viable option in certain circumstances, such as when a child is unable to find a suitable adoptive family within their own country. Ultimately, the best interest of the child should always be at the forefront of any adoption decision, whether domestic or international.

The court of Sabata is mainly responsible in the facilitation of domestic adoption, which highlights the rigorous screening process in place to ensure that prospective adoptive parents can provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child. Throughout the adoption process, collaboration with child welfare authorities (Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth and the police of the region) ensures the child's needs are being met. The response also discusses the benefits of domestic adoption, including allowing children to remain within their own culture and community, promoting family preservation and reunification efforts, and providing a loving and permanent home. The best interest of the child should always be the top consideration in any adoption decision, whether domestic or international

## **6.5 Insights from experts working in Sebeta's Foster care called Tursistu Daimani**

There is an office that serves as a temporary residential place (foster care) with police and ministry of children and youth, which is responsible to take care of the abandoned children until they are given to adopting parents. It is called "Tursistu Daimani." This temporary residence place and care for children who are abandoned in Ethiopia can provide several benefits for the children said the manager who is working there called



Ayantuu, who was 45 years old. Safety and protection are one benefit for children who may be at risk on the streets or in other unsafe situations. These facilities also ensure that children have access to basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and healthcare, temporary residences care facilities to provide educational and vocational opportunities that can help prepare children for a successful future. Socialization and emotional support is offered by psychologist and social workers working there. Children in these facilities also benefit from socialization with other children. Family reunification is another important provision, it also can provide an opportunity for family members to be located and for efforts to reunite the child with their biological family. In cases where family reunification is not possible, temporary residence care can also provide a pathway to adoption for children who need a permanent home.

## **6.6 Discussion**

The growing childcare crisis caused by orphanhood and other factors in Ethiopia has led to a significant increase in the number of children who require alternative care arrangements. The most common forms of alternative care arrangements in Ethiopia are foster care, kinship care, and domestic adoption. According to UNICEF (2021), there are an estimated 5 million orphans and vulnerable children in Ethiopia, with approximately 1.3 million children who have lost both parents.

The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia has been identified as one of the key contributing factors to the growing childcare crisis. According to Gaolathe et al. (2016), an estimated 690,000 people were living with HIV in Ethiopia in 2019, with approximately 23,000 deaths attributed to AIDS-related illnesses. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has resulted in a significant increase in the number of children who have lost one or both parents, and who require alternative care arrangements such as adoption.

Poverty is another significant factor contributing to the growing childcare crisis in Ethiopia. Children from poor families are more likely to experience neglect, abuse, and abandonment, and may require alternative care arrangements to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Additionally, the erosion of traditional family values and the breakdown of the extended family system have contributed to the need for alternative care arrangements such as adoption.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) mentions adoption in a few different articles, including Articles 9, 20, and 21 where Article 9 states that a child should not be separated from their parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine in accordance with applicable law and procedures that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child This could include cases where the child is adopted by a new family. Article 20 of the UNCRC is specifically about children who cannot be raised by their own family, stating that such children are entitled to special protection and assistance from the state, and that alternative care, such as foster care or adoption, should be provided when necessary (Zermatten, 2010). Lastly, Article 21 establishes that countries that recognize or permit the system of adoption shall ensure that the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration and shall ensure that the adoption is authorized only by competent authorities who determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, that the adoption is permissible in view of the child's status concerning parents, relatives, and legal guardians and that, if required, the persons concerned have given their informed consent to the adoption on the basis of such counseling as may be necessary (Zermatten, 2010).

In summary, the UNCRC acknowledges that adoption can be a necessary option for children who cannot be raised by their own family and establishes that it should be carried out in accordance with the best interests of the child and with appropriate legal and procedural safeguards.

In Ethiopia, domestic adoption is regulated by the Children's Adoption and Protection Act, which sets out legal and procedural safeguards to ensure that adoptions are carried out in the best interests of the child. However, despite these legal safeguards, there have been concerns about the implementation of adoption procedures in Ethiopia, particularly in relation to issues of corruption, lack of transparency, and unethical practices by some adoption agencies and intermediaries.

In this context, Article 21 of the UNCRC is particularly relevant as it emphasizes that the best interests of the child should be the paramount consideration in adoption. This means that the primary focus of any adoption process should be to ensure the well-being and protection of the child. Moreover, Article 21 stresses the importance of competent authorities making decisions about adoption based on all pertinent and reliable information, ensuring that informed consent has been obtained from all parties, and that all legal and procedural safeguards have been followed.

However, it is important to note that domestic adoption in Ethiopia cannot be fully understood in isolation from the wider social, economic, and political context in which it takes place. In Ethiopia, poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare, and other social factors can lead to situations where families are unable to care for their children. In these situations, adoption can provide a way for children to be placed in safe and supportive homes where they can thrive (Bodja & Gleason, 2020)

The ban on international adoption highlights the importance of prioritizing the best interests of the child and ensuring that legal and procedural safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable children. The ban also raises questions about the role of international adoption in addressing the needs of children in developing countries. While international adoption can provide a way for children to be placed in loving and supportive homes, it is important to ensure that such adoptions are carried out in accordance with the best interests of the child and that adequate safeguards are in place to prevent abuses of the adoption process (Cantwell & UNICEF, 2014).

Overall, the different offices that are responsible for the process of domestic adoption in Ethiopia focuses towards making sure that the best interest of a child is met. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children and requires that the best interests of the child be a top priority in all decisions that affect children (Article 3), (Freeman, 2007).The UNCRC recognizes that children are vulnerable and require special protection, and that decisions affecting them should be made in their best interests. This means that in any situation involving a child, their needs and well-being must be considered above all else, including the interests of adults or organizations involved (Freeman, 2007). Moreover, the best interest of the child is also recognized as a fundamental principle of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, SDG 16.2 aims to "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children," which requires ensuring that decisions affecting children are made in their best interests. In addition, SDG1(No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10

(Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) all have a direct or indirect impact on children's best interests (Assembly, 2015).

The best interests of the child in the process of domestic adoption in Ethiopia is influenced by international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These frameworks recognize the vulnerability of children and the need for special protection, emphasizing that decisions regarding children should prioritize their well-being and needs above all else.

In the context of my project, the concept of the best interests of the child connects to the ban on intercountry adoption in Ethiopia, which has been a political issue tied to national identity and heritage. The ban reflects the government's aim to prioritize domestic adoption and maintain a sense of cultural continuity by ensuring that children remain within their Ethiopian cultural context.

Regulations regarding who can adopt and what constitutes a stable, loving home are designed to ensure that the best interests of the child are met. These regulations aim to assess prospective adoptive parents' ability to provide a safe, nurturing, and culturally appropriate environment for the child. They may include requirements related to financial stability, marital status, age, health, and the completion of a thorough home study or assessment process.

By emphasizing the best interests of the child, these regulations aim to protect children from potential risks and ensure that they are placed in suitable and supportive families. The definition of a stable, loving home may encompass factors such as emotional well-being, a secure and nurturing environment, access to education and healthcare, and the promotion of the child's cultural identity and heritage.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) emphasizes that decisions affecting children should prioritize their best interests, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also recognize the "best interests of the child" as a fundamental principle (Freeman, 2009).

In the context of domestic adoption in Ethiopia, interpreting and applying the principles of the best interests of the child as outlined in the UNCRC and the SDGs involves considering several factors. It means that the welfare and well-being of the child should be the primary consideration in all decisions and actions related to adoption (Freeman, 2009). To determine the best interests of the child in the adoption process, various aspects need to be considered. These may include safety and protection, physical and emotional well-being, stability and continuity, preservation of identity, participation and voice, and non-discrimination (Freeman, 2009). The interpretation and application of the best interests of the child principle in domestic adoption require a comprehensive assessment of each child's unique circumstances, considering their individual needs, background, and cultural context to make informed decisions that promote their overall well-being and development (Freeman, 2009). By adhering to these principles and safeguards, domestic adoption in Ethiopia can strive to provide stable and loving homes for children, promoting their rights and overall well-being in line with international standards and commitments.

The ban on intercountry adoption in Ethiopia has made domestic adoption even more important, but it is important to consider the potential impact of the ban on the

availability of adoptive families and the quality of care for children in institutional settings. Regulations around who can adopt and what constitutes a "stable, loving" home must be considered to ensure that there is no bias or discrimination in the adoption process. Appropriate screening and training for prospective adoptive parents is crucial to ensure that they can provide a safe and nurturing home environment for the child.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) is a treaty that was adopted by the African Union in 1990. It outlines the rights and protections that should be afforded to children in Africa, and it places a particular emphasis on the role of parents, families, and communities in ensuring that those rights are upheld.

About the adoption process, the ACRWC recognizes the importance of ensuring that the best interests of the child are the primary consideration in any decision regarding adoption (Union, 1990). It also requires that the child's views be considered, and that the child be provided with appropriate information about their adoption (Union, 1990). In terms of the responsibility of women, the ACRWC recognizes that women and girls are often subject to discrimination and violence, and it seeks to protect them from such harm. This includes ensuring that they have access to education and health care, as well as protecting them from child marriage and other harmful practices (Union, 1990). Additionally, the ACRWC recognizes that women often play a key role in the care and upbringing of children, and it seeks to ensure that they have the support and resources they need to fulfil that role (Union, 1990).

The UNCRC emphasizes that the best interests of the child should be a top priority in all decisions affecting children and requires that this principle be applied in a manner consistent with the child's rights and needs. It also recognizes the importance of respecting the child's views and providing them with appropriate information. The ACRWC similarly emphasizes the importance of the best interests of the child, but also highlights the need to consider the child's cultural background and context. It also recognizes the importance of protecting women and girls from discrimination and violence and supporting them in their role as caregivers.

Overall, the ACRWC emphasizes the importance of protecting the rights and welfare of children, including those who are adopted, and it recognizes the critical role that parents, families, and communities play in ensuring that those rights are upheld, but also that children are kept in their local and national contexts, so that they can learn from and contribute to these societies (Art 31).

In Ethiopia, the police, courts, and Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth office works together to ensure that the best interests of children are met in the adoption process. They play a critical role in protecting the rights and welfare of children, and they are responsible for enforcing laws and regulations related to adoption.

The demand for domestic adoption has increased in Ethiopia due to the growing childcare crisis and the need for alternative care arrangements. According to Ashenafi (2017), the number of domestic adoptions in Ethiopia has increased from 491 in 2008 to 2,465 in 2014. The authors note that most domestic adoptions in Ethiopia are carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and religious institutions.

In conclusion, the growing childcare crisis caused by orphanhood and poverty, combined with the erosion of traditional family values, has led to an increase in the demand for alternative care arrangements such as adoption in Ethiopia. Domestic adoption has

emerged as a solution to provide children with a stable and loving family environment. The increase in domestic adoption in Ethiopia is a response to the needs of vulnerable children who require alternative care arrangements to ensure their safety, wellbeing, and prospects.

In Ethiopia adoption agencies have been involved in illegal activities related to the adoption of children. Specifically, there have been cases of child laundering, which involves falsifying documents to make it appear as though a child is an orphan, and child harvesting, which involves recruiting or buying children for the purpose of adoption. These activities have been facilitated by the adoption agencies and local authorities (Steenrod, 2022).

The number of adoption agencies operating in Ethiopia has increased due to the closure of adoption systems in other countries, such as Romania, Guatemala, Cambodia, Nepal, and Vietnam (Rotabi & Gibbons, 2012).

Inter-country adoption process has become increasingly driven by demand, with reports of fraudulent activities and other criminal practices. These practices include the provision of false documentation, such as falsely declaring parents as deceased, and providing misleading information to the courts. As a result of these illicit operations, families have been separated, and opportunities for building their lives have been lost, with a significant number of financial resources being expended on inter-country adoption. In Ethiopia, adoption agencies have been found to have created a dependency on their funding, leading to a continued demand for inter-country adoption at the expense of family services. This situation highlights the need for further investigation and the implementation of effective measures to address fraudulent activities in inter-country adoption (Rotabi & Gibbons, 2012).

Domestic adoption, or the practice of adopting children within Ethiopia, has played an important role in the country's cultural practice of raising children for many years (Grotevant et al., 2000). In Ethiopia, domestic adoption is often seen to provide care and support for children who may have been orphaned, abandoned, or otherwise in need of a family.

One of the key reasons for the significance of domestic adoption in Ethiopia is the high number of children who need care. According to UNICEF. (2005) there are over 5 million orphans in Ethiopia, many of whom have lost one or both parents to disease, conflict, or other causes. Domestic adoption provides a way for these children to find stable and loving homes.

In addition, domestic adoption is seen to uphold traditional cultural values and practices. In many parts of Ethiopia, the extended family plays an important role in raising children, and adoption is seen to strengthen these family ties and provide support for all members of the family said one respondent.

There are also religious and spiritual reasons for the significance of domestic adoption in Ethiopia. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, for example, adoption is seen to show love and compassion for others and to fulfil the Christian duty of caring for the less fortunate emphasized by few respondents.

The significance of domestic adoption in Ethiopia can be understood through the lens of social constructionism. Social constructionism is a theoretical approach that emphasizes the role of culture and society in shaping individual experiences and perceptions of

reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In the case of adoption, social constructionism suggests that the meaning and significance of adoption are not inherent in the practice itself but are constructed through social and cultural processes.

In the Ethiopian context, the significance of domestic adoption is constructed through a complex interplay of cultural values, religious beliefs, and practical considerations. As noted by Fisher et al. (2017), adoption in Ethiopia is deeply embedded in cultural traditions and beliefs about family and kinship. These beliefs shape the way in which adoption is perceived and practiced, emphasizing the importance of family ties and the role of adoption in preserving cultural heritage.

Similarly, the religious and spiritual significance of adoption in Ethiopia is also socially constructed. As noted by Smith (2013), adoption is seen to fulfil religious obligations and demonstrate obedience to God's commandments. These beliefs are shaped by cultural and social processes that have shaped the religious landscape of Ethiopia over time.

Overall, social constructionism provides a useful framework for understanding the complex cultural, social, and historical factors that shape the meaning and significance of domestic adoption in Ethiopia. By recognizing the ways in which adoption is socially constructed, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the cultural values and beliefs that underlie this important practice and better understand its role in Ethiopian society. Domestic adoption is an important cultural practice in Ethiopia that serves both practical and symbolic purposes. Providing homes for orphaned and vulnerable children helps to ensure that they have access to the care and support they need to thrive. And by upholding traditional values and beliefs, it helps to maintain a sense of community and connectedness within Ethiopian society. Domestic adoption in Ethiopia has deep cultural roots, and it is intricately tied to traditional beliefs and practices. One of the key reasons why domestic adoption is significant in Ethiopia is its role in strengthening kinship ties and preserving cultural values. As noted by Fisher et al. (2017), the extended family system is an integral part of Ethiopian society, and it plays a crucial role in the upbringing and care of children. In this context, adoption is seen to reinforce family ties and provide support for all members of the family, particularly in cases where the biological parents are unable to care for their children.

Research has shown that domestic adoption in Ethiopia is often driven by cultural factors, such as the desire to maintain family lineage and honour (Roberts et al., 2013). For instance, some families may adopt children from relatives who have passed away or are unable to care for their children due to poverty or illness. In such cases, adoption serves to preserve the family name and ensure the continuity of the family line. Similarly, adoption may be used to strengthen ties with extended family members or to provide support for elderly relatives who are unable to care for their grandchildren (Roberts et al., 2013).

As noted by Assefa et al. (2013), adoption is viewed to fulfil religious obligations and show love and compassion for others. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, adoption is seen to carry out the Christian duty of caring for the less fortunate, particularly children who have been orphaned or abandoned. Adoption is also viewed to demonstrate obedience to God's commandments and to receive blessings in return (Assefa et al., 2013).

In addition to these cultural and religious factors, domestic adoption in Ethiopia is also seen as a practical solution to the problem of orphanhood and child abandonment.

According to a study by (Unicef, 2018). Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of orphanhood in the world, with an estimated 4.5 million children who have lost one or both parents. Domestic adoption provides a means to provide homes for these children and ensure that they have access to the care and support they need to thrive.

In conclusion, domestic adoption in Ethiopia is a complex and multifaceted practice that serves both practical and symbolic purposes. Its significance is deeply rooted in cultural values, kinship ties, and religious beliefs. Adoption is seen to strengthen family relationships, preserve cultural traditions, and fulfil religious obligations. At the same time, adoption provides a means to address the problem of orphanhood and ensure that vulnerable children have access to the care and support they need to thrive.

Raising children by exposing them to their own cultural values and experiences is a vital aspect of their development. This approach can help children develop a strong sense of identity, self-esteem, and belonging. Culture is a critical part of one's identity. By exposing children to their own cultural values and experiences, parents can help them develop a strong sense of identity, which is crucial for their mental and emotional well-being (Schwartz, 2012). Children who feel a connection to their cultural heritage tend to have higher self-esteem, are more confident, and have a positive outlook on life.

In addition, children who are exposed to their own cultural values and experiences tend to have a better understanding of their own culture and other cultures. This exposure can help them develop social skills, including communication and empathy, which are essential for building relationships with others (Denham, 2003). Such children are also more likely to appreciate diversity and respect the differences between people (Denham, 2003).

Exposure to cultural values and experiences also leads to positive mental health outcomes for children. For example, a study conducted by (Tummala-Narra et al., 2018) found that, Chinese American children who were connected to their cultural heritage had positive mental health outcomes, including low levels of anxiety and depression.

In conclusion, exposing children to their own cultural values and experiences is essential for their development. This approach can help children develop a strong sense of identity, better social skills, and positive mental health outcomes. Therefore, parents and caregivers should take steps to ensure that their children have ample opportunities to learn about their culture and heritage.

## **6.7 Chapter Summary**

In conclusion, exposing children to their own cultural values and experiences is essential for their development. This approach can help children develop a strong sense of identity, better social skills, and positive mental health outcomes. Therefore, parents and caregivers should take steps to ensure that their children have ample opportunities to learn about their culture and heritage.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

## 7. Introduction

The process of domestic adoption is a complex and multifaceted cultural practice that plays a significant role in shaping the lives of children and families in various societies. This thesis explores the role and significance of domestic adoption as a cultural practice of raising children within the context of the Sabata region. By examining the perspectives, motivations, and experiences of adoptive families, as well as the insights and experiences of government personnel involved in adoption facilitation, and the process of care within the domestic childcare system, this research has shed light on the intricacies and challenges inherent in this practice. In this final chapter, I will present the conclusions drawn from this study and offer a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, cultural sensitivity, and overall well-being of domestic adoption practices in the Sabata region. These recommendations are intended to guide policymakers, practitioners, and relevant stakeholders in their efforts to create a nurturing and inclusive environment for children and families involved in the adoption process, and to further promote the understanding and celebration of cultural diversity within this realm.

## 7.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has delved into the role and significance of domestic adoption as a cultural practice of raising children, focusing specifically on the Sabata region. By exploring the perspectives, motivations, and experiences of adoptive families, as well as the insights and experiences of government personnel involved in adoption facilitation, and the intricacies of the process of care within the domestic childcare system, valuable insights have been gained. Through the analysis of these research questions, a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and complexities surrounding domestic adoption in Sabata has been achieved.

The perspectives, motivations, and experiences of families involved in adoption practices revealed the profound impact that adoption has on their lives. It became evident that adoptive families have a deep sense of love, commitment, and a genuine desire to provide a nurturing environment for their adopted children. Their experiences highlighted both the joys and challenges they encountered throughout the adoption process, underscoring the need for ongoing support and resources to ensure the well-being of both the children and the families involved.

The perspectives and experiences of the government officials responsible for facilitating domestic adoption shed light on the intricate workings of the system. Their insights emphasized the importance of clear policies, streamlined processes, and continuous professional development to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of adoption services in the Sabata region.

Examining the process of care within the domestic childcare system provided a comprehensive understanding of the various stakeholders involved in the practice. From caregivers to social workers, each plays a crucial role in the well-being and development of adopted children. The cultural practices, rituals, and ceremonies associated with



domestic adoption were revealed as significant elements that foster a sense of belonging, identity, and cultural preservation for adoptive families.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

Considering the findings, it is recommended that policymakers, practitioners, and relevant stakeholders focus on the following areas to further enhance the role and significance of domestic adoption as a cultural practice of raising children in the Sabata region:

- **Strengthening support systems:** Develop comprehensive support programs that address the emotional, psychological, and practical needs of adoptive families throughout the adoption process and beyond.
- **Collaboration and training:** Foster collaboration between government offices, adoption agencies, and relevant organizations to ensure regular training and professional development opportunities for personnel involved in adoption facilitation. This will enable them to navigate complex cultural dynamics and provide culturally sensitive services.
- **Streamlining processes:** Streamline administrative processes and reduce bureaucratic hurdles to make domestic adoption more accessible and efficient, while maintaining strict safeguards for the well-being of children.
- **Cultural awareness and education:** Promote cultural awareness and education among adoptive families, professionals, and the wider community to foster a climate of inclusivity, respect, and celebration of diverse cultural backgrounds.
- **Tailored support for adoptive parents:** Develop support programs that specifically address the needs and motivations of adoptive parents. This may include providing counseling services, support groups, and resources to help them navigate the unique challenges of adoption and parenting.
- **Specialized training on cultural integration:** Offer specialized training to adoptive parents on understanding and embracing the cultural background of their adopted child. This training should focus on promoting cultural sensitivity, facilitating identity formation, and navigating cultural differences within the family unit.
- **Facilitating post-adoption connections:** Create platforms or networks that enable adoptive parents to connect with other adoptive families. This can provide opportunities for sharing experiences, exchanging advice, and building a supportive community.

By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that the practice of domestic adoption in the Sabata region will continue to evolve into a more nurturing, supportive, and culturally sensitive process, ultimately benefiting the lives of children and families involved. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this research will contribute to the broader understanding of domestic adoption as a significant cultural practice of raising children, enriching academic discourse, and inspiring further research in this field.

## References

- Abbink, J. (1998). An historical-anthropological approach to Islam in Ethiopia: issues of identity and politics. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 11(2), 109-124.
- Abebe, T., & Aase, A. (2007). Children, AIDS and the politics of orphan care in Ethiopia: The extended family revisited. *Social Science & Medicine*, 64(10), 2058-2069. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.02.004>
- Amaratunga, D., Baldry, D., Sarshar, M., & Newton, R. (2002). Quantitative and qualitative research in the built environment: application of "mixed" research approach. *Work study*, 51(1), 17-31.
- Amenu, T. (2008). *The rise and expansion of Islam in Bale of Ethiopia: socio-cultural and political factors and inter-religious relations*
- Amsalu, A., & Adem, A. (2009). Assessment of climate change-induced hazards, impacts and responses in the southern lowlands of Ethiopia.
- Amundsen, D. L., Msoroka, M. S., & Findsen, B. (2017). "It's a case of access." The problematics of accessing research participants.
- Ansell, N., & Van Blerk, L. (2004). Children's migration as a household/family strategy: coping with AIDS in Lesotho and Malawi. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30(3), 673-690.
- Aries, P. (1962). Centuries of. *Childhood*, 339-410.
- Ashenafi, H. (2017). *Exploring the Practice of Domestic Adoption: the Case of Selected Organizations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia* Addis Ababa University].
- Assembly, G. (2015). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 11 September 2015. *New York: United Nations*.
- Avila, B. E. (2016). *Importance of motherhood and/or social stigma of infertility: What's driving infertility-related outcomes?* Michigan State University.
- Bailey, P. E., Keyes, E. B., Parker, C., Abdullah, M., Kebede, H., & Freedman, L. (2011). Using a GIS to model interventions to strengthen the emergency referral system for maternal and newborn health in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*, 115(3), 300-309.
- Bali, I. S. J., & Maros, I. P. I. (2012). internet. extension. web. id 17 Hours Information Services. *Ethnic groups*, 2, 34.35.
- Baltar, F., & Brunet, I. (2012). Social research 2.0: virtual snowball sampling method using Facebook. *Internet research*, 22(1), 57-74.
- Bank, W. (2020). *Global economic prospects, June 2020*. The World Bank.
- Beckstrom, J. H. (1972). Adoption in Ethiopia ten years after the Civil Code. *Journal of African Law*, 16(2), 145-168.
- Benedek, T. (1959). Parenthood as a developmental phase: A contribution to the libido theory. *Journal of the American psychoanalytic Association*, 7(3), 389-417.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor.
- Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 191-222.
- Bernard, T., Dercon, S., Orkin, K., & Taffesse, A. S. (2019). Parental aspirations for children's education: Is there a "girl effect"? experimental evidence from rural ethiopia. *AEA Papers and Proceedings*,

- Bessell, S., Beazley, H., & Waterson, R. (2017). The methodology and ethics of rights-based research with children. *'Children Out of Place' and Human Rights: In Memory of Judith Ennew*, 211-231.
- Bialeschki, M. D., & Michener, S. (1994). Re-entering leisure: Transition within the role of motherhood. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26(1), 57-74.
- Billi, P. (2015). Geomorphological landscapes of Ethiopia. *Landscapes and landforms of Ethiopia*, 3-32.
- Bishop, R. (1998). Freeing ourselves from neo-colonial domination in research: A Maori approach to creating knowledge. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 11(2), 199-219.
- Bjorklund, D. F., & Pellegrini, A. D. (2000). Child development and evolutionary psychology. *Child development*, 71(6), 1687-1708.
- Blackie, D. E. (2014). *Sad, bad and mad: exploring child abandonment in South Africa* University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities, School of Social ...].
- Bodja, S., & Gleason, K. (2020). Domestic Adoption In Ethiopia. In H. Emily, M. Elisha, & W. Gretchen Miller (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Adoption*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429432040>
- Britannica, T. (2020). Editors of encyclopaedia. *Argon. Encyclopedia Britannica*.
- Brunger, R. G. (2009). Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey.(2009). Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 205 pages, plus preface, acknowledgements, references, and indices. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 24(1), 179-181.
- Burr, V., & Dick, P. (2017). *Social constructionism*. Springer.
- Butler, J. (2011). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. routledge.
- Cantwell, N., & UNICEF. (2014). *The best interests of the child in intercountry adoption*. UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.
- Chacko, E. (2003). Ethiopian ethos and the making of ethnic places in the Washington metropolitan area. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 20(2), 21-42.
- Chaillot, C. (2006). The Ancient Oriental Churches. WAINWRIGHT, Geoffrey & Karen B. Westfield TUCKER, eds. *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*. Oxford: OUP, 131-169.
- Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004). Social influence: Compliance and conformity. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 55, 591-621.
- Code, F. (2000). The revised family code of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. *Proclamation No. 213/2000*, 1(1), 1-56.
- Culley, L., Law, C., Hudson, N., Denny, E., Mitchell, H., Baumgarten, M., & Raine-Fenning, N. (2013). The social and psychological impact of endometriosis on women's lives: a critical narrative review. *Human reproduction update*, 19(6), 625-639.
- Denham, S. A. (2003). Social and emotional learning, early childhood. In *Primary Prevention and Health Promotion* (pp. 1009-1018). Springer.
- Engedayehu, W. (2013). The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in the Diaspora: Expansion in the midst of division. *African Social Science Review*, 6(1), 8.
- Fantini, E. (2015). Go Pente! The charismatic renewal of the evangelical movement in Ethiopia. *Understanding contemporary Ethiopia: monarchy, revolution, and the legacy of Meles Zenawi*, 123-146.
- Fisher, E., Attah, R., Barca, V., O'Brien, C., Brook, S., Holland, J., Kardan, A., Pavanello, S., & Pozarny, P. (2017). The livelihood impacts of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa: beneficiary perspectives from six countries. *World Development*, 99, 299-319.

- Fokala, E. (2022). The Adverse Effect of Immigration Laws on a Migrant Child's Right to Family Life: A Reminder of the South African Nandutu Case. *Nordic Journal of Human Rights*, 40(4), 568-583.
- Freeman, M. (2007). *A Commentary on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3: The Best Interests of the Child: Freeman Article 3: The Best Interests of the Child*. Brill.
- Freeman, M. (2009). Children's rights as human rights: Reading the UNCRC. *The Palgrave handbook of childhood studies*, 377-393.
- Gafurov, Z., Eltazarov, S., Akramov, B., Yuldashev, T., Djumaboev, K., & Anarbekov, O. (2018). Modifying hargreaves-samani equation for estimating reference evapotranspiration in dryland regions of Amudarya River Basin. *Agricultural Sciences*, 9(10), 1354.
- Gaolathe, T., Wirth, K. E., Holme, M. P., Makhema, J., Moyo, S., Chakalisa, U., Yankinda, E. K., Lei, Q., Mmalane, M., & Novitsky, V. (2016). Botswana's progress toward achieving the 2020 UNAIDS 90-90-90 antiretroviral therapy and virological suppression goals: a population-based survey. *The lancet HIV*, 3(5), e221-e230.
- Glenn, E. N. (2016). Social constructions of mothering: A thematic overview. *Mothering*, 1-29.
- Gobeil, S. M.-C., Janowska, K., McDowell, S., Mansouri, K., Parks, R., Stalls, V., Kopp, M. F., Manne, K., Li, D., & Wiehe, K. (2021). Effect of natural mutations of SARS-CoV-2 on spike structure, conformation, and antigenicity. *Science*, 373(6555), eabi6226.
- Goffman, E. (1963). Stigma englewood cliffs. *NJ: Spectrum*, 127-128.
- Greil, A. L., Slauson-Blevins, K., & McQuillan, J. (2010). The experience of infertility: a review of recent literature. *Sociology of health & illness*, 32(1), 140-162.
- Grotevant, H. D., Dunbar, N., Kohler, J. K., & Esau, A. M. L. (2000). Adoptive identity: How contexts within and beyond the family shape developmental pathways. *Family relations*, 49(4), 379-387.
- Groza, V., & Bunkers, K. M. (2014). ADOPTION POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED DOMESTIC ADOPTION PRACTICE: A COMPARISON OF ROMANIA, UKRAINE, INDIA, GUATEMALA, AND ETHIOPIA. *Infant Ment Health J*, 35(2), 160-171. <https://doi.org/10.1002/imhj.21439>
- Haynes, K. (2012). Reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*, 26, 72-89.
- Hays, P. A. (1996). Addressing the complexities of culture and gender in counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74(4), 332-338.
- Holmes, P., & Farnfield, S. (2014). Attachment-based interventions: Sensitive parenting is the key to positive parent-child relationships. In *The Routledge handbook of attachment: Implications and interventions* (pp. 97-117). Routledge.
- Huopalainen, A. S., & Satama, S. T. (2019). Mothers and researchers in the making: Negotiating 'new'motherhood within the 'new'academia. *Human Relations*, 72(1), 98-121.
- Kramarae, C., & Spender, D. (2004). *Routledge international encyclopedia of women: Global women's issues and knowledge*. Routledge.
- Kvale, S. (1996). The 1,000-page question. *Qualitative inquiry*, 2(3), 275-284.
- Lanza, E., & Woldemariam, H. (2008). Language ideology and linguistic landscape: Language policy and globalization in a regional capital of Ethiopia. In *Linguistic Landscape* (pp. 229-245). Routledge.
- Levine, D. N. (2014). *Greater Ethiopia: The evolution of a multiethnic society*. University of Chicago Press.

- Mahoney, A. (2010). Religion in families, 1999–2009: A relational spirituality framework. *Journal of marriage and family*, 72(4), 805-827.
- McAreavey, R., & Das, C. (2013). A delicate balancing act: Negotiating with gatekeepers for ethical research when researching minority communities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 12(1), 113-131.
- Mekonen, T., Giday, M., & Kelbessa, E. (2015). Ethnobotanical study of homegarden plants in Sebeta-Awas District of the Oromia Region of Ethiopia to assess use, species diversity and management practices. *Journal of ethnobiology and ethnomedicine*, 11, 1-13.
- Melaku, T., & Hilliard, C. History of Africa: Ancient Ethiopia.
- Milkias, P., & Metaferia, G. (2005). *The Battle of Adwa: Reflections on Ethiopia's historic victory against European colonialism*. Algora Publishing.
- MOARETA, M. (2015). *CONTRIBUTION AND CHALLENGES OF ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHIDO CHURCH FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF GONDAR CITY*
- Morgan, D. L. (2002). Focus group interviewing. *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*, 141, 159.
- Muchie, Z., & Bayeh, E. (2015). Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms among ambo Woreda communities. *Journal Political Science Publication Aff*, 3, 1.
- Narrood, C., Zinsstag, J., & Tiongco, M. (2012). A one health framework for estimating the economic costs of zoonotic diseases on society. *EcoHealth*, 9, 150-162.
- Norozi, S. A., & Moen, T. (2016). Childhood as a social construction. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 6(2), 75.
- PETROS, T. (2019). *LANGUAGE USE IN TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN HADIYA*
- Phelan, S. K., & Kinsella, E. A. (2013). Picture this... safety, dignity, and voice—Ethical research with children: Practical considerations for the reflexive researcher. *Qualitative inquiry*, 19(2), 81-90.
- Proclamation, F. C. S. (2007). *Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Prout, A., & James, A. (2015). A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood?: Provenance, promise and problems. In *Constructing and reconstructing childhood* (pp. 6-28). Routledge.
- Rao, A., & Kelleher, D. (2005). Is there life after gender mainstreaming? *Gender & Development*, 13(2), 57-69.
- Redmond, M., & Martin, B. (2023). All in the (definition of) family: Transnational parent-child relationships, rights to family life, and Canadian immigration law. *Journal of Family Issues*, 44(3), 766-784.
- Roberts, K. A., Campbell, G., & Lloyd, G. (2013). *Honor-based violence: Policing and prevention*. CRC Press.
- Roby, J. L., & Shaw, S. A. (2006). The African orphan crisis and international adoption. *Social Work*, 51(3), 199-210.
- Rotabi, K. S., & Gibbons, J. L. (2012). Does the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption adequately protect orphaned and vulnerable children and their families? *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 21, 106-119.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. sage.
- Salzman, M. R. (2004). Pagan and Christian notions of the week in the 4th century CE western Roman empire. *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World*, 185-211.

- Schwartz, S. H. (2012). An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values. *Online readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1), 2307-0919.1116.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers college press.
- Shibuya, T., & Taylor, V. (2013). Alternative care options and policy choices to support orphans: The case of Mozambique in the context of the SADC. *International Social Security Review*, 66(1), 71-95.
- Shiferaw, A. (2008). *Inter country Adoption The Law and practice* ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY].
- Smith, L. (2013). *Making citizens in Africa: Ethnicity, gender, and national identity in Ethiopia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Spradley, J. P. (2016). *Participant observation*. Waveland Press.
- Steenrod, S. A. (2022). The Legacy of Exploitation in Intercountry Adoptions from Ethiopia: "We Were under the Impression That Her Birth Parents Had Died". *Adoption Quarterly*, 25(2), 81-108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2021.1884157>
- Teferi, L. (2012). The post 1991 'inter-ethnic' conflicts in Ethiopia: An investigation. *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution*, 4(4), 62-69.
- Tony, K. (2013). Religion and social cohesion in Ethiopia. *International journal of peace and development studies*, 4(3), 43-52.
- Tummala-Narra, P., Li, Z., Chang, J., Yang, E. J., Jiang, J., Sagherian, M., Phan, J., & Alfonso, A. (2018). Developmental and contextual correlates of mental health and help-seeking among Asian American college students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 88(6), 636.
- Unicef. (2018). *Levels and trends in child malnutrition*.
- UNICEF. (2021). The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2021.
- UNICEF. (2005). *The state of the world's children 2006: excluded and invisible*. Unicef.
- Union, A. (1990). African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. *Addis Ababa: African Union*.
- Welsh, M., & Peterson, E. (2014). Issues in the conceptualization and assessment of hot executive functions in childhood. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*, 20(2), 152-156.
- Whiteford, L. M., & Gonzalez, L. (1995). Stigma: the hidden burden of infertility. *Social Science & Medicine*, 40(1), 27-36.
- Whitley, R., & Kirmayer, L. J. (2008). Perceived stigmatisation of young mothers: An exploratory study of psychological and social experience. *Social Science & Medicine*, 66(2), 339-348.
- Wilson, M. N. (1986). The Black extended family: An analytical consideration. *Developmental Psychology*, 22(2), 246.
- Wolin, S. J., & Bennett, L. A. (1984). Family rituals. *Family process*, 23(3), 401-420.
- Yasin, Y. M. (2010). *Regional dynamics of inter-ethnic conflicts in the horn of Africa: An analysis of the Afar-Somali conflict in Ethiopia and Djibouti* Staats-und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky].
- Young, L., & Ansell, N. (2003). Fluid households, complex families: the impacts of children's migration as a response to HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. *The Professional Geographer*, 55(4), 464-476.
- Zermatten, J. (2010). The best interests of the child principle: literal analysis and function. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 18(4), 483-499.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix I**

#### **Part (I) Interview Guide for the Ministry of Women Children and Youth**

1. Gender of respondent?
2. Your Age?
3. what is your educational level?
4. What is the role of your organization in the practice of domestic adoption?
5. Do you have any written document that states about the rules and procedures of domestic Adoption and how it is taking place?
6. How many children had been adopted so far?
7. What are the criteria's to be fulfilled to Adopt a child?
8. What is the advantage of domestic adoption than other forms of adoption like foster care, international adoption?
9. What do you think about the ban of the International Adoption?
10. Do you see any cultural benefits of the domestic adoption?

### **Appendix II**

#### **Interview guide of Focus Group Discussion with Ministry of Women Children and Youth**

1. How do you see the ban of international adoption in Ethiopia impacted the adoption process? (positive/negative?)
2. What is the relevance of adopting and raising a child by local parents?
3. What are the challenges that you encounter when you give a child to Adopting parents? explain?
4. Do you see there are things that could be improved to protect the rights of adoptees? If yes, can you mention?

### **Appendix III**

#### **Interview Guide for police**

1. Gender of respondent?
2. Your Age?
3. what is your educational level?
4. What is your role in the domestic adoption process?
5. From where do you find the children?
6. What do you do after finding the child?
7. Do you intentionally go there to check whether a child is thrown there or if it's accidentally that you find the child?
8. In what kind of situation do u mostly find a thrown baby(physical?) condition?

### **Appendix IV**

#### **(II) Interview Guide for Federal First Instance Court**

1. Gender of respondent?
2. Your Age?
3. What is your position in this office?
4. What is the role of the Court (your organization) for the domestic adoption?
5. Do you have any written document that will state about what has been done so far?

6. How did you know that the best interest of the child is met before the adoption process takes place?
7. How do you see the replacement of international adoption by domestic adoption?



## **Consent form for Ministry of Women Children and Youth**

Dear Mis/Mrs,

I am Kidist Getachew Seyoum, student at Norwegian University of Science and Technology conducting my thesis on the Role and Practice of Domestic Adoption (in country Adoption) in Oromia Region Sebata, I would like to request your willingness to participate in this study, the question that I will be asking is primarily intended as preliminary criteria for the partial fulfilment required for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in childhood studies.

All data and information gathered through this question is used for the sole purpose of the research and remain confidential, the questions will be explained in terms that you're understanding, and your voice will be recorded using Dictaphone, Only I and members of the research staff/my Advisor, if any will have access to information that I record or write note. Therefore, I kindly request your willingness to participate. Participation is voluntary, you can choose the question you would like to respond and can withdraw from the study anytime if you do not want to participate. Cooperation You made is not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of describe coding procedures and plans to safeguard data, including where data will be kept, who will have access to it.

I would like to extend my heart full gratitude in advance for being a volunteer to devote your valuable time in participating in this study.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

## **Consent form for Mana Murtii Aanaa Magaala Sabbataa (District Court of the City of Sabata**

I am Kidist Getachew Seyoum, student at Norwegian University of Science and Technology conducting my thesis on the Role and Practice of Domestic Adoption (in country Adoption) in Oromia Region Sebata, I would like to request your willingness to participate in this study, the question that I will be asking is primarily intended as preliminary criteria for the partial fulfilment required for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in childhood studies.

All data and information gathered through this question is used for the sole purpose of the research and remain confidential, the questions will be explained in terms that you're understanding, and your voice will be recorded using Dictaphone, Only I and members of the research staff/my Advisor, if any will have access to information that I record or write note. Therefore, I kindly request your willingness to participate. Participation is voluntary, you can choose the question you would like to respond and can withdraw from the study anytime if you do not want to participate. Cooperation You made is not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of describe coding

procedures and plans to safeguard data, including where data will be kept, who will have access to it.

I would like to extend my heart full gratitude in advance for being a volunteer to devote your valuable time in participating in this study.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

### **Consent Form for Adopting Parents**

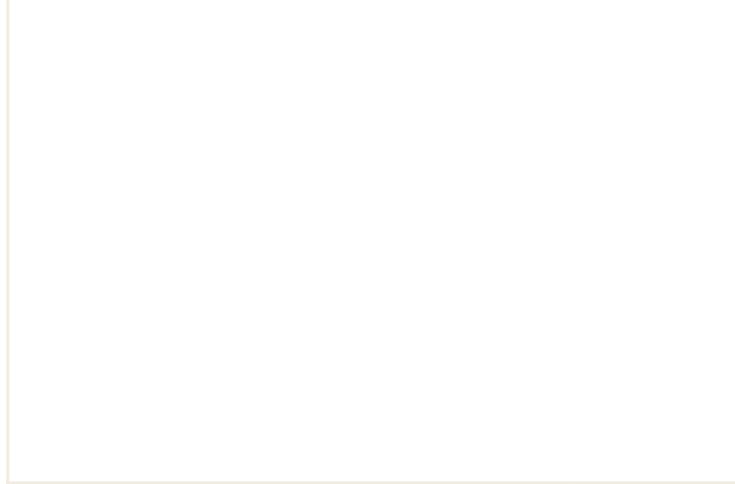
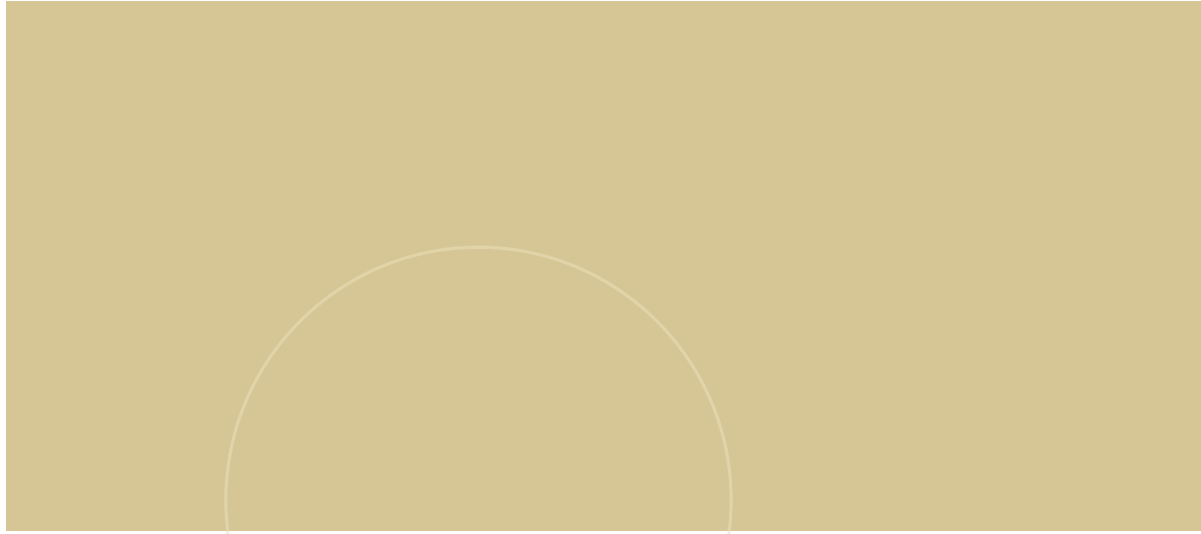
I am Kidist Getachew Seyoum, student at Norwegian University of Science and Technology conducting my thesis on the Role and Practice of Domestic Adoption (in country Adoption) in Oromia Region Sebata, I would like to request your willingness to participate in this study, the question that I will be asking is primarily intended as preliminary criteria for the partial fulfilment required for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in childhood studies.

All data and information gathered through this question is used for the sole purpose of the research and remain confidential, the questions will be explained in terms that you're understanding, and your voice will be recorded using Dictaphone, Only I and members of the research staff/my Advisor, if any will have access to information that I record or write note. Therefore, I kindly request your willingness to participate. Participation is voluntary, you can choose the question you would like to respond and can withdraw from the study anytime if you do not want to participate. Cooperation You made is not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of describe coding procedures and plans to safeguard data, including where data will be kept, who will have access to it.

I would like to extend my heart full gratitude in advance for being a volunteer to devote your valuable time in participating in this study.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.



 **NTNU**

Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology