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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### NEGATIVE IMAGES OF WOMEN IN ARSI OROMO PROVERBS

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze proverbs that represent women negatively among the Arsi Oromo. The proverbs used for the study were 15 theme-relevant proverbs collected by interviewing systematically selected 10 elders, focus group discussion and by analyzing documents. Qualitative research design was used to conduct this study. Women were negatively represented in the proverbs as: weak, as the causes of conflict, and evil. They were also represented negatively as unreliable, properties of men, ignorant and as sex objects. Based on these findings, awareness creation trainings should be given to demotivate the use of proverbs having negative images towards women. Arsi Oromo families have to encourage their children to use proverbs that reflect gender equality, and the society, at large, should totally avoid the use of proverbs that reflect outdated negative perception of femininity in their overall ways of life.

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## INTRODUCTION

In Ethiopia, after the era of political change in 1991, efforts are being made to improve the legal and social status of women as evidenced by the articles in the new constitution. The government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has announced a new women's policy which aims at giving equal opportunity to Women to participate in all spheres of life. It has also opened a Women's Affairs Office (WAO) with branch offices in the regions. The office is given the responsibility of promoting women's issues and it is working to this end. But, due to the scarcity of well-planned research projects and publications, valuable data on the socio-economic situation of women are not adequate. This causes the problem to be more serious than other things. As a result it has become very problematic to change the lives of many women in our country as it is supposed to be. This research could be useful to fill the gap that the ministry of women's affairs is facing in Ethiopia. As one of the developing countries, Ethiopia is a poor country where majority of the people live in the countryside. The case of gender discrimination is very high here and even in most parts of the country it is considered as normal part of the tradition. For example, circumcision of girls, abduction and early marriage are being practiced even nowadays.

As a result of these, women suffer at delivery, and also they are exposed to fistula due to early marriage and other related problems. Though the society knows that such practices are not good for women, it is considered as culture and hence they have continued practicing them as "normal and deserving" to women. What makes the problem more serious is that the society has inculcated the idea of oppressing women in the mind of every generation using oral literature like proverbs to oppress women. In the case of Arsi Oromo women are assumed to be the property of men that men bought at the wedding ceremony. Hence they have the right to punish them and also treat them like their own property. This causes great suffering for their whole life, physically and psychologically. This study, therefore has tried to analyze the extent of the negative images of women in the proverbs of the Arsi Oromo's of Ethiopia.

**Conceptual Review of Proverbs:** Proverbs are considered the most common genre of folklore, found among all cultures of the world. They are simple and often short statements with deep meaning, guidelines for individual, family and village behaviors. Proverbs are not built from a vacuum, rather on repeated real life experiences and observations. Like any form of language, "proverbs are mirrors through which people look at themselves – a stage for experiencing themselves to others" (Malunga & Banda, 2004: 2). Similarly, Jackie Lee (2015) notes that proverbs are the mirror of culture in that they "can reflect the customs, traditions, values, opinions and beliefs of a particular society" (2015: 561).

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Indeed, by looking at peoples proverbs, we can understand how they think and look at the world, their culture, values, behaviors, aspirations, and preoccupation. A proverb is an adage, a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense, and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth expressed in it (Finnegan, 1970). Similarly, Okpewho (1992) suggests that, proverb is a piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm. Proverbs can further be defined as “short wise sayings which are often based on observable facts and heavily linked with the culture of the people” (Zakariyah, 2013: 22). Based on the above definitions, proverbs could be conceptualized as any wise saying that converts the central idea in a given context, objectively and truthfully. While much has been written on what a proverb is, it is more important to understand what a proverb does. According to the Yoruba of Nigeria, “Proverbs are the horses of speech” meaning that in the event where communication gets lost, proverbs are used to recover it (Schipper, 1991: 1). Schipper’s idea is succinctly apparent in the following Igbo proverb which says, “Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (Oha, 1999: 87), meaning that proverb help to accelerate the smooth glide of words through the throat.

**Theoretical Framework:** This study is anchored on a combination of theoretical approaches including patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity and feminism. Through the lens of these theories, the study tries to find out to what extent proverbs have been used among the Arsi Oromo’s to maintain the traditional sexual depiction of women. The study therefore attempts to identify and analyze women’s sexuality as portrayed in Arsi Oromo proverbs. In a society where patriarchal practices and beliefs are prevalent, the relationship between men and women is based on gender inequality. Patriarchy, as defined by social scientists such as Weber (1947), is “a system of government in which men rule society through their position as head of households” (quoted in Walby, 1990: 19). However, the meaning of the term has advanced since Weber, especially in the writing by radical feminists, who developed the elements of the domination of women by men. For example, Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women” (1990: 20). This particular culture privileges the exercise of men’s power over women. Commenting on the meaning of patriarchy and its effects on women, Mutunda (2015) observes: Patriarchy is a gender system in which men dominate women. The endorsed superior status of men is encouraged and sustained by social institutions that are considered unquestionable. In addition, this system of social stratification based on sex provides men with power and material advantages while depriving women of both those benefits.

Deeply entrenched in the concept of patriarchy is the notion of hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity is “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (2005:77). Hegemonic masculinity, when embodied by at least some men overtime and space, legitimates men's domination over women as a group. In essence, hegemonic masculinity, as Mutunda (2015) suggests, refers to that view of masculinity which has established dominance in society. In addition, this form of masculinity is mostly supported by social institutions

namely schools, religion, and law, just to cite a few. Furthermore, Mimi Schippers (2007:94) has defined hegemonic masculinity as “the qualities defined as manly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity and that by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women in their society”.

As shown in the definitions above, hegemonic masculinity legitimates the domination of men over women. Feminists have also focused on this gender inequality which stresses women’s inferiority to men. Three feminist approaches namely the liberal, radical, and socialist, try to provide different explanations for the roots of gender inequality. Liberal feminism holds that “women and men are identical by their essential nature but women are deprived of the opportunities to realize their potentials on account of their gender” (Ndungo, 1998:47). Another liberal feminist, Betty Friedman (cited in Belfatmi, 2013: 16) explains gender inequality in terms of culture and social subordination. She maintains that “lack of equal rights in different fields including education is the root of women’s oppression.” In fact, the liberal feminists believe there is no such thing as male/female nature but human nature. They imagine a society inhabited by human beings who will be the same in their essential nature. When some feminists began to perceive the inequality between women and men, they used the term “radical” to signify their commitment to seek the origin of the root cause of this inequality. One such theorist is Shulamith Firestone (1970) who is believed to be the first radical feminist. Throughout her work titled the dialectic of sex (1970), Firestone stresses that the root cause of women’s subordination is their biology. She argues that women’s biology, which includes menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, makes them to be dependent on men. This dependence inevitably produces unequal power relationships (Firestone, quoted in Belfatmi, 2013: 16).

Other radical feminists argue that patriarchy is the origin of inequality existing between males and females. They focus on patriarchal oppression in every sphere of women’s lives from the most private to the most public. They stress the need to revalue the creative and nurturing aspects of femininity which have been devalued and distorted in patriarchal society. For instance, in her *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millet (1970) maintains that patriarchy is perpetuated by the family, being the primary source of socialization which provides men with dominant disposition. She believes that patriarchy is the source of many social problems faced by women. She also argues that gender inequality is not related to social class but to male domination over women. In the same breath, Hartman (1997) argues that patriarchy creates the conditions for women to be systematically dominated, exploited and oppressed. The very difference between men and women, which allow men to exploit the situation to dominate women and rule the world, is the very difference that concern radical feminists on a political level. Radical feminism sees that men have benefited of inequality; women, on the other hand, carry out unpaid work in higher jobs positions. Consequently, “unlike liberal feminism which claims that gender inequality should be reformed, radical feminism believes that it should be totally eradicated” (Belfatmi, 2013:17). Radical feminism promotes womanhood rather than aspiring to integrate and assimilate into male-dominated social arena. It is focused upon sexual oppression as a manifestation of women’s oppression and social order.

Marxist and socialist feminism, nevertheless considers the entire system of capitalism as the root of women oppression. This theory highlights the provision of cheap labor to enhance capitalism. The theory finds significance in class relation in that one class is more advantaged than the other. Social feminists believe that the exploitative economic relations, where the worker is exploited by the dominant capitalist class, could serve as an understanding of gender relations. They further argue that women are second class citizen in patriarchal capitalism which demands for its survival on exploitation of working people and on the social exploitation of women (Humm, 1992). Social feminists hold that one way to get rid of gender inequality is the establishment of a communist society in which the production of wealth is commonly owned. They, therefore, relate gender inequality to economic differences.

## Methodology

**Design of the Study:** Qualitative research design was used for the study. This is because it was believed to be suitable to interpret and explicate the existing gender related problems as revealed in the selected proverbs of the Arsi Oromo's.

**Subjects of the Study:** The major population of this study is the Arsi Oromo people at Arsi Negele Woreda. The researcher collected a total of more than 50 proverbs reflecting women's negative representations in the proverbs. However, a sample of 15 proverbs was drawn from the 50 to the manageability and relevance of the study. Regarding the collection of the proverbs; document analysis, focus group discussion and semi-structured interview for 10 selected elders were used. Then, the collected proverbs were filtered based on their thematic relevance for the study and the selected 15 proverbs were analyzed qualitatively.

**Sampling Technique:** For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling procedure to come up with 15 proverbs having thematic reflection of women's negative representations. The proverbs were collected through interviewing 10 elders who were systematically selected (using snowball sampling) from various communities of West Arsi areas (at Kereru and kersa) at Arsi Negele Wereda based on their deep knowledge of Arsi Oromo's people's culture and by document analysis.

**Data Analysis:** For the analysis of the proverbs, the researcher used qualitative method of data analysis. Then, the researcher transcribed the proverbs, translated them into English, analyzed and interpreted them within their relevant thematic category based on the theoretical framework of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity and feminism.

**Analysis of the Selected Proverbs:** The discussions in this paper are based on data collected from documented sources, focus group discussion and interviews made with 10 Arsi native informants. The proverbs were then put into categories according to various themes that were found relevant to shade light on the ways women's negative representations is perceived among the Arsi Oromo people. They were depicted negatively as follows:

## Comparing Women with Animals

Harree fi dubartiin ulee jaallatti

A woman like a donkey is fond of a rod

Comparing man or women with animals is common in proverbs. They can be represented or compared with them positively or negatively. Men are mostly represented with animals with positive implications, whereas women are usually represented with negative connotations. For example when we say he is a lion, we are using a metaphor to represent a man with a lion to show how much powerful he is. Like the above proverb it is common to associate women with animals in most proverbs. Here in this proverb selected from Arsi Oromo women are given the attribute of a donkey. First we have to understand what kind of meaning it gives when women are related with the behavior of a donkey. The proverb uses simile to make an association between a women and an animal. The society describes a donkey as a lazy being, ignorant and disobedient to its owners. But a donkey is also a hard working animal that serves its owners in transportation services. But usually donkeys are beaten while they resist giving extra service. So, why women are likened with a donkey and thought to be beaten while they serve their family and the community in everything they could. The reason is because the society has developed a negative attitude towards women even though they labor to help their family and the community as far as they can. The Arsi Oromo has a culture of beating wives because they consider that a woman is bought with a price at the wedding and she is the property of her husband. In any case it will not be fair to punish women with a rod or stick like we do to our animals; in the time when the world is struggling to liberate their animals from any form of physical punishment.

Dhalaan fardaafi beerri ulfina hinbeektu.

A woman like a female horse do not know respect

Like the above proverb this also uses simile to compare a woman with a female horse. As usual it compares a woman character with a horse. Symbolizing a woman with an animal is a degrading issue of women's dignity as human being. The extent of rejecting female identity also applies to animals, in that a female horse is also looked down upon without any reason. But we know that there is no difference between male and female animals since they do not possess human qualities because they cannot think or are not rational. To put it in short there is no human being that hates glory or respect whether men or women because a human being is a moral being that has emotion that knows what is good and bad and also have social norms that has precious norms which are valuable to their own community. This proverb has nothing in it except a hatred for women and simply an insult originated from ignorance about women's value in the society. Proverbs like this one should be rewritten so that we can redefine the representations of women in the society by comparing them with positive attribute of animals. For example we can compare a woman's strength with a hoarse and a donkey. This can bring changing images of women at least in the written literature of our society. Now I will show you what will happen or how women are compared with a horse at their old age or when they are not a girl in the Arsi Oromo.

Nadheenii ffaradoon galgala baddi

A woman like a horse is helpless at old ages

This proverb compares old women with an old horse using simile. The Arsi Oromo woman is helpless and is like an old horse that will be thrown outside because they are no more useful or helpless at old age. A horse is a very strong being; it

is diligent while it works, and people benefit a lot from it especially in the countryside areas. It is a means of transportation, entertainment, war vehicle and so on. So is a woman; she bears children, handles all the household activities, and sustains the family's life by serving them with all her strength. But what will happen finally is like the fate of the horse. A horse will be thrown away out of the house when it becomes old and can no longer be of any use to the family. The fate of the horse is to be eaten by Hyenas while it was alive because of its lacking strength at the end. The expression is used to show how a woman will be treated at the end, when she lacks strength. Even though she works hard when she is young, she will be left alone and gets nothing because all things that she produced will be for her husband and male children.

### **Women as the Wealth of Men**

Isiinuu hori horii hinqadhaabbattu.

She does not own wealth (cattle) as she is wealth (cattle) by herself. In this proverb a metaphor is used and a woman is replaced by wealth. A wealth is not a person but it is the property of others. In order to understand the above proverb, it is good to see the contextual meaning of cattle in the Arsi Oromo culture. Cattle are the symbol of prosperity. If somebody holds a number of cattle, whether well feed or not, he is respected and considered as secured in his community. Cattle are very important in the life of the Arsi Oromo. For example, if they want to take a wife for their son, it is not thinkable without giving cattle as gift to the family of the girl which is called "geberra" in their language. They will get a wife if they have cattle. Due to this, the Arsi Oromo think of marriage as an exchange of cattle with a woman, which they call both of them as wealth. Moreover the Arsi Oromo use the phrase "How much do you sell your daughter?" to ask for the hand of daughter they liked. I have a personal experience in relation to this incident, once upon a time while my father who is not among the Arsi, but still from the other group of Oromo was requested how much he wanted to sell his daughter (my younger sister). I remember what my father felt; he was very much disappointed, and was not happy with the questions forwarded to him. Now, when we come to the meaning of the proverb, it means Women are equal to cattle or wealth. But the main point is not only considering women as cattle (wealth), but also alienating all financial resources from them. This implies that women do not have a share and even they are considered as the wealth of men. This proverb generally shows that women are totally dependent on men economically and also they are considered as the wealth of men. The proverb does not say they do not own wealth, of course they do not, but the point is rather they themselves are the wealth of men. This destroys their identity as a human being. It also shows that the woman is considered as "other" therefore she is not represented as subject.

### **Women as the Causes of Conflict**

Ibiddi dubertiin qabsiifte hindhaamu

A fire lit by a woman shall not be extinguished.

As it is known a fire is a very powerful thing, even if it is small it can destroy a forest once it is burnt. Here a woman is represented as an agent of conflict that never ends.

The fire is the symbol of destruction in the proverb listed above. Relating woman with fire is due to the assumption that woman are a catalyst for conflicts in the society. If a society accepts this assumption as a reality the result is woman's value will be degraded and they are considered as the source of evil in the society. Assumptions that are like this, is the cause of the negative attitudes that any society develops against women. In any case it will not be fair to relate women with the causes of conflict; while both men and women could be a cause of conflict in any society.

### **Women as Ignorant**

Dubartiin dhertu male, bektun hinqabdu.

A woman could be tall, but she could not be knowledgeable.

It is undeniable that there is no direct relationship between height and knowledge, because there are lots of people who are tall and are both intellectual as well as ignorant; as the same time there are short people who are intellectuals and also those who are ignorant. This shows that knowledge is not dependent on height in any case and it is illogical to think in this way. But proverbs like this one discourage the society from sending their female children to school.

Dubartiin deessuu malee beektuu hinqabdu.

A woman may bear a child, but she is not knowledgeable.

The above proverb is related with this one in that both of them gives value for women's bearing ability. Here it is good to see the context of how a traditional society thinks about gender differences and preferences. A babe boy is preferred in a traditional community, because they think that a female is not the member of her family. The male is thought to strengthen the family's line by inheriting what the family possesses. While the woman is considered as a go away child, because of marriage she is supposed to join another family. Due to this a woman is not considered as important as a man and will not be allowed to get inheritance in her own family and also in the place where she goes after marriage. This causes woman to lose economic advantages even though they are very important in household activities and in child rearing which is a very tiresome work in a traditional society. Moreover the proverb denies women's ability of acquiring knowledge, and gives recognition for their ability of bearing a child. There is nothing wrong with bearing a child; it is the gift of nature and great responsibility to sustain any society in this world. But because of the responsibility of women's child bearing, denying their ability to acquire knowledge is unfair and injustice which shows that women need more treatment than men because of the burden they carry as a mother.

### **Women as weak**

Dubartiin segel mana hinijaartu dheban nama hinawwaltu

Nine women cannot build a house, a hundred cannot bury a corpse. First let me elaborate the cultural meaning of this proverb, because without this context it is very hard to understand what it means. In the countryside areas it is men who build a house with the community turn by turn. The same is true in burial sermon; men are expected to bury a corpse. Therefore the reason men build a house and bury a corpse is

because of job preference of the society; but not women's inability to build a house or bury a corpse. As we know, nowadays women build a house which is better than the traditional one, even better houses than men do if they get the capital. And also burying somebody can be performed by professionals if the income is available. This shows that the idea is purely traditional and the job classification is not based on ability but on the preference of men and their impositions on women the type of job they wanted. It is also possible to infer that there is no logical relationship between the types of job women or men do. This shows that our cultural attitude towards job classification is biased and needs appropriate modification by changing the society's attitude towards them.

Dubartiin hamamuu yoo beekte dhiiraan haadhumatu

Whatever a woman knows, it is a man that concludes.

Before analyzing this proverb, let me present a proverb which is exactly similar with it in Amharic: "Men set betawq bewend yaleq". The similarity of the proverbs may be because of the socio cultural relationships between the two people in the country. According to this proverb even though a woman has got knowledge about anything she is expected to be under men's control, due to the expectation that she is less reliable than men. This makes women to be passive and men to be active in decision making. The matter is not whether men or women decide finally, because if women decides finally men are looser and if men decides as they do women are looser, in both cases it is unfair; but the crucial point is women are expected to accept any kind of decision which may affect their life while men make a final remark on women's conditions

Dubartiin dhiira deessi malee dhiirahin geettuu

A female may bear a male, but she will not be equal with him  
In this proverb the value of woman is measured because of her potential to bear a son, but not because of her being a female. Moreover this proverb puts woman in an inferior position when she is compared with men. This proverb is very dangerous because it demoralizes women mentally and tries to persuade them that they are not equal with men, hence, no need of competing with men. But nowadays we know that women do not only bear males, but led them as well when they get the opportunity to do so. Here we also should have to consider that it is not woman that bears a male or female individually, because both men and women are important for bearing a child.

Animaaf dubartii ta'eko badduu hinhojjanne;

Ati maaf dhiiraa taate kabadduu anni hojjadhe naa hinobsine?

Why I became a woman, if I do not commit a mistake;  
Why you became a man, if you do not tolerate me, while I commit a mistake?

This proverb put woman's destiny with a failure. Women's being is related with making mistakes that should be tolerated by men. Here, Women are not only doers of mistake, but they are also the source of it because of their being women. Men are free of the guilt of committing mistakes like women, because their being is better than women and are expected to handle mistakes originating from women. This may causes identity crisis, because women are expected to think as they are inferior

to men by their nature. But it is not logical to think that making mistakes is based on gender rather than on once personal preferences whether for men or women. We can also deduce from this proverb that women have the ability to live with men, inspire of the fact that they are considered as lower than men. Because the implication of the proverb could be, if you think as a man that I am inferior than you are, so tolerate me and handle me with peace. If the meaning is perceived in this way, women may be the source of their own discrimination in the society because of their own preference of conflict resolution to bring peace between them and men their partners.

### Women as unreliable

Mootummaan dubartii bishaan olyaafiti

The government of women makes water flow upward

First let me start from the literal meaning of the proverb. It seems logical to think that water flows downward which are natural and unquestionable in any traditional society. But nowadays it is known that water can go upward using pressure application through a water pipe. So, thinking currently like the traditional society shows lack of knowledge and ignorance. The second point is when we come to the implication of the proverb; that women try things that are impossible; as a result they are not fitting for leadership position. This assumption is also totally wrong, because our world is changed because of those who tried to make possible those things that seem impossible. If humanity has not tried to fly like a bird, we would not have seen a plane nowadays. If humanity has not attempted to discover new planets we could not have seen well developed space discoveries that seems impossible at the beginning. I can count lots of things here that seemed impossible, but proved to be possible because humanity has changed them into possibility. If women are like the above proverb, I believe that they would have changed the world better than it is now, if they have got the proper place they deserve in any society, because they are change agents that attempts the impossible one.

Beeraa fi ijoollee icitiitti hinhiman

A secret should not be told to women and children

"Dhiira Amaaraafi dubartii Oromoo garaa isaanii osoo hinargin biraa bane.' Jedhe Xaaliyaaniin"

"We could not get the heart of the Amhara men and the Oromo women.' said the Italians"

I deliberately presented the two proverbs above; because they contradict with each other and proves that thinking woman as talkative to the point of exposing secret is wrong. Children may expose secret due to lack of maturity, but well developed women knows what is good and bad and it will not be sound to assume that women are like children who do not know what is to be told and kept as a secret. Of course some women may expose secret like men also do, but there could not be any difference between the two sexes in the matter because of their identity. The second proverb even gives more value in keeping secrets for women than men. The historically based proverb's context disproves the assumption that women are not to be trusted like men because of their gender differences from men. This also shows that thinking a proverb as a general truth as a

definition needs to be redefined because of the wrong assumptions some proverbs might hold like the one we discussed here.

### Women as Sex Object

Dubartiin xiqqoo hinqabdu  
A woman is never little

There is also an Amharic equivalent to this Arsi Oromo proverb, it says: "Yesetna yemasero tenesh yelewem" it means: "there is no little girl and pot" while I collect proverbs among the Arsi Oromo's, when I asked why they use this proverb, one of my interviewee who is very aged, told me the context why people started to use this proverb. The man told me that an oral narrative how this proverb came into being. Once upon a time a woman went to her would be husband's family, where she was taken being betrothed before her actual marriage time reached, due to her immaturity she was forced to wait till she gets matured and be given for her husband officially. But the girl wanting to marry her future husband did something challenging her husband's family. In the middle of the night, she rose up and excreted a little amount and slept as nothing happen deliberately. When the family rose early in the morning the house was full of bad smell, then they started asking what happened in the family. Then the little girl started responding for them that it is very little that she excreted. But the family of her future husband responded to her that even though it is very small but it is still feces. Finally she surprisingly responded for them that even though she is very little but she is a woman and capable of doing anything expected from her. Most of the proverbs in the Arsi Oromo are connected with oral narratives for their origin whether it is truly related or not to make it more reliable and truthful. This gives the proverb more power and will have the influence to shape the societies attitude positively or negatively. For example this proverb is used to strengthen the early marriage practices in the Arsi Oromo and also in the Amhara society. But we know what bad consequences early marriage holds in any society. Some of the problems that are caused by early marriage are : early pregnancy which causes mostly death at birth, fistula due to early sexual experiences before the body of little girls get matured enough, dropping out of school because of the responsibility that women take at home like feeding her family and rearing children, etc.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

While collecting the proverbs I have also gathered information about the society's attitude towards the proverbs that are negative towards women. Most of the women do not support the Proverbs that negatively represents them. When I tried to know why they are against those proverbs representing them negatively, they told me that they are getting different trainings by the government to bring attitudinal change. But some of the women do not support the idea of equality among men and women and they do not want their husbands to help them in their household activities which they consider their own business. Likewise most men in the rural areas do not support the equality of women with men, but due to their fear of the government's policy they are not willing to express their opinion about the issues directly, but indirectly they sometimes shows their disagreement towards gender related issues. Most of the men who oppose the equality of women with men are aged and illiterate. The majority of my interviewee in the Arsi

Oromo do not accept that their culture by itself being the cause of women's domination by men. They believe that the inclusion of their region into King Menilk's control and the conversion of the people from traditional religion "Waqeffata" in to Islam and Christianity have caused the problem of women's subordination and domination by men. I believe that if the teachings that support women's negative representations were discouraged by religious and cultural leaders through teaching the community it is easy to change the society, in addition to the attempt the government is making to bring change. I say this because most of the people in our country live in the countryside and they are illiterate, and they originate most of their knowledge from their religion and culture. In the Arsi Oromo's culture there are lots of good things about women, encouraging those positive ideas about them, and discouraging the negative things said about women could change the society's way of thinking and finally would bring the equality of women and men in the society. I have also observed that almost all the negative proverbs about women do not have any ground of truth; rather they are usually an insult about womanhood which originates from a wrong perception about them. Moreover the proverbs contradict with each other, some proverbs consider women as ignorant, but at the same time other proverb advises youngsters to be wise like women. Some proverb consider a woman as an animal deserving to be beaten with a stick or rod, but at the same time another proverb put women as the king of humanity. This contradiction among the proverbs, disqualify the definition of proverbs by most scholar as a general truth, because a truth does not contradict with itself. Hence it is mandatory to change the negative attitude the society developed due to these biased proverbs towards women by teaching the community as much as possible.

I was also able to recognize critical issues about women by living among the community at least for six months where I have collected the data; most women do not have extra business except house hold activities. As a result of this, most women, after finishing their household activities they are accustomed with wasting their time by drinking coffee moving from one house to the other. They back bite with each other, quarrel with irrelevant issues and also help each other in times of hardship. Due to this if the government wants to be effective in implementing its policies towards gender related issues, the government should have to invest on women by helping them with finance so that women could begin their own businesses that would help them change their life radically.

### Recommendation

Based on the results of this study it will be good if the following measures are taken and implemented by all the concerned bodies in our country in general and in the study areas in particular. Some of the recommendations are:

- The Government of Ethiopia must focus on the cultures and the religions of different areas in our country to be effective in the implementations of Gender related policies.
- Gender related education must be given starting from early childhood in every school in the country in order to build up the minds of the generation on the equality of men and women to solve the problem at the grass root level.

- Expanding training on Gender issues all over the country is also very important. But this one is very difficult and needs the involvement of religious leaders, because matured people are not usually willing to change their thinking. As a result they need traditional means to convince them about the problem the cultural and religious thinking brings on women.
- Using the culture and religion of the society to solve Gender related problems is very effective in a traditional country like Ethiopia where the majority of the people lives in the countryside and believes in their religions and culture more than science and modern way of life.
- The Governments Medias are not giving enough time for Gender related issues. Rather they give more time for the governments' propaganda and other less relevant issues like Europeans football while women are dying because of gender related problems in the country. Therefore, the Medias should be used properly to the advantage of women in the country to change the society's attitude towards them.
- To bring attitudinal transformation on Gender issues in our country the government institutions, religious institutions, academic institutions, culture and ministry of women's affair must work together.
- At the level of higher education in our country giving common courses on Gender issues and conducting research extensively on the representations of women in the oral and written literature is very important to change and improve the situation of women radically. In order to achieve this, the government and the society should have to put great investment on issues related with women.

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