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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE DEPICTION OF MOTHERHOOD IN WOLAITA AND ARSIOROMO PROVERBS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine and analyze the representations of women in Wolaita and Arsi Oromoproverbs. The study analyzed Wolaita and Arsi Oromo proverbs by using theories from feminism and hermeneutic interpretations. Qualitative research design was used for the study. This is because it was believed to be suitable to interpret and thematically explicate the existing gender related issues in the proverbs of the two societies in Ethiopia. Textual analyses were chosen as a method of analyzing the proverbs. The result shows that in the selected proverbs mothers were represented positively. The result revealed that it is at odds with most of the representations of women in Ethiopian folklore that usually represented women negatively. Based on this result, the study recommends a balanced representation of women to be incorporated in the study of women in gender related issues.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Michael (1996), within western thought woman is theoretically subordinated to the concept of masculinity and is viewed by the man as his opposite, that is to say, as his other, the negative of the positive. The subordination of women within the very structure of western thought is at the root and reinforces daily the physical and psychological oppression of women and the continued dominance of men, challenges to the system that perpetuates these inequitable positions are potentially compatible with feminist aims. The concept of the subordination of women is also true for African and the others nations. Tinker (1976), states that masculine and feminine stereotyping exists in almost every culture. Men are supposed to be strong logical, analytical, systematic, fearless, and assertive, whereas women are supposed to be the opposite: soft, emotional, uncertain, timid, shy, intuitive, and fearful. She also argues that tradition has forced women to conform to codes that restrict their behavior and make them subservient to men. These codes were pronounced long ago in religious texts and elaborated in plays, poems, and stories. In china, for example, Confucius and Mencius instructed women to adorn themselves, to please, to do house work willingly, and not to talk too much.

In India, Hindu literature taught male supremacy and female submissiveness. Daughters were 'precious jewels lent to parents until their husband claimed them.' In Latin America, the teaching of the Catholic Church relegated women to an inferior status and represented them as belonging to their husbands. Buddhist portrays women as a cause of the craving, anxiety, and unhappiness of men. In Moslem culture, Shari-ah law still permits a man to marry more than one wife. It has been left to the man's decision to decide how many wives he needs; the man also has a unilateral right to divorce his wife anytime he wishes. These cases are not also different in our country Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, even though the society is deeply traditional, the depiction of women in proverbs and the powerful impacts they may project seem to have been neglected as part of crucial gender issue. Every day, women are seen participating in cultural activities. However, the ways they are depicted in the tradition may be limited and traditionally stereotyped. It may be argued most of us often fail to recognize how women and men are portrayed and what the portrayals would suggest. But studies could help women to critically question how they were represented in proverbs. In African generally and in Ethiopia particularly, few studies have been carried out on gender and proverbs in general and specifically on how mothers are depicted in Wolaita and Arsi Oromo proverbs. Proverbs depict women with various roles, behaviors and activities. It may be, therefore, important to critically analyze mothers' image portrayed in proverbs and attempt to indicate their possible implications.

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This study, therefore, attempts to investigate, in a critical way, how mothers are depicted in the proverbs. The researcher has been interested on the study of proverbs towards the representation of motherhood, because of its influence and the position mothers have in a traditional society and our people's philosophy of life. The content touches every aspect of society's traditional and modern way of life. The proverbs deals with issues of motherhood and others. Since this study focuses on mothers, the researcher found it interesting to investigate how motherhood was depicted in Wolaita and ArsiOromo proverbs. The two people were selected because of the cultural similarity of the two people in relation to their gender related views as the researcher observed by living among the two societies.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine and analyze the images of motherhood as depicted in Wolaita and ArsiOromo proverbs.

Conceptual framework of the study

The concept of Motherhood: The term motherhood, which began to be used at the end of the nineteenth century, refers to the state or condition of being a mother. Motherhood is usually distinguished from the term mothering in that mothering is the set of activities or practices concerned with nurturing and caring for children. While mothering entails a focus on the everyday practices associated with being a mother and looking after children, motherhood is a social institution and is thus characterized by specific meanings and ideologies. Mothering is defined as the social practices of nurturing and caring for people, and thus it is not the exclusive domain of women (Arendell 2000). In most societies, however, women not only bear children but also are primary caretakers of infants and children. The two terms are, however, inextricably linked in that the practices of mothering in any society are performed and experienced in the context of the meanings and ideologies of motherhood.

For Umberson (1989) the difference between mothering and motherhood has a consequence for understandings of both mothering and motherhood. For example, the focus on mothering as performance of the tasks essential to child rearing meant that those who studied child development in the 1970s and 1980s extended the term mothering to include child rearing done by men who nurture children. In contrast, as stated by Starrels (1994) motherhood is associated only with women since the state of motherhood has a direct impact on women's lives, regardless of whether or not they become mothers. In most societies a central feature of motherhood is that it should ideally occur within a heterosexual relationship where a man and a woman are cohabiting (and preferably legally married). The rearing of children is supposed to be the major task of this unit, which is idealized as bound together through mutual ties of affection, common identity, and relationships of care and support. This model is often assumed to be the natural and normal (as well as ideal) form of social organization and to be stable over time. Arendell (2000) argues that images of motherhood have not changed sufficiently to accommodate social changes. Ideologies of motherhood continue to suggest implicit disapproval of many categories of mothers, including those who are single, aged under twenty,

and either out at work for long hours each day or unable to make economic provision for their children. In practice there is often less sharing of household and child care work between mothers and fathers than might be expected. As a consequence there is a marked discrepancy between the expectations of motherhood and the experiences of mothering, with the result that motherhood is painful and disappointing for many women. This discrepancy points to the fact that motherhood is not naturally occurring but is socially constructed in ways that suggest that there is an essence to motherhood. According to Starrels (1994) mothers are likely to be a constant presence throughout their children's lives. Mothers frequently refer to the use of common sense and intuition in raising children—as if no special knowledge is required and as if many of their practices are grounded in some biological instinct. With respect to the relationship between motherhood and marital quality, studies during the last two decades found that women's relationships with their children are richer and more complex than men's (Umberson 1989) and thus women will experience both more strain and greater rewards from the parental role.

Women's psychological well-being is influenced by many factors including mothering performance. Mothers frequently assume the caretaker role in the family, which may increase the likelihood that they are attentive to, and thus possibly receivers of emotions from other family members. In contrast to fathers' experiences, the emotions mothers experienced at their jobs did not foreshadow their emotional states at home in the evening (Larson and Richards, 1994). This suggests either that mothers are more capable of compartmentalizing work and home (i.e. leaving work behind) than are fathers, or that the urgent tasks they must perform when they come home readily overwhelm what happened that day at work. Mothers' psychological well-being, however, is more likely to be influenced by the daily routine of childrearing activities. Mothers report greater satisfaction with parenting than fathers, and they are more supportive than fathers of their children (Starrels, 1994). At the same time, however, mothers of infants report higher levels of stress and anxiety when they evaluate their own performance as mothers than do their male counterparts (Arendell, 2000). Compared with fathers, mothers are more involved with the responsibility for daily childcare, which exposes them to a wider range of disagreements and tension with their children (Hochschild, 1989). Additionally, the extent of mother's child-care related stress level is frequently affected by the societal expectations for women to be "good mothers" (Estella, 2005).

To solve gender related African problems I think gender and allied concepts have to be examined from African cultural experiences and epistemologies. This is the way through which African experiences can be taken into account in general theory building. It is within this context that the works of theorists, such as Catherine Acholonu (1995) are significant. Acholonu uses the term 'motherism' as a 'multidimensional Afro centric theory to define what she sees as being 'the essence of African womanhood' (1995:110). She argues that African feminism is distinctly heterosexual and grants a pivotal place to the distinctively supportive roles of the African women as opposed to Western women.

Definition of Feminism: According to Peterson and Runyan (1993) feminism is an orientation that views gender as a fundamental ordering principle in today's world, that values

women's diverse ways of being and knowing, and that promotes the transformation of gender and related hierarchies. Burris (2005) has defined feminism as a concern with the impact of gender on writing and reading which does not simply look at literature from female writers or from female characters' point of view but attempts to uncover what a particular text has to say about gender and gender differences. Michael (1996) also has defined feminism as a movement to eradicate men's dominance over women, as well as revalue women's differences from men. He also stated that feminism criticizes the dominant male centered culture from a particular position and view point, which is concerned with the complex power relations, particularly gender and sex relations; between people, institutions, ideologies, languages and other systems that function within culture at large, and aims in various ways to end women's oppression.

According to Tyson (1999) feminism is a revolt on the patriarchal expectation in line with components of social and cultural expectations of how women shall live act or be ordered. He also stated that feminism distinguishes between the word sex, which refers to our biological constitution as female or male, and the word gender, which refers to our cultural programming as feminine or masculine which are categories created by society rather than by nature. Feminism criticizes the dominant male centered culture from a particular position and view point, which takes into consideration the complex power relations, particularly gender and sex relations, between people, institutions, ideologies, languages and other systems that function within culture at large, and aims in various ways to end women's oppression. A feminist approach to understanding literature attempts to uncover what a particular text has to say about gender and gender differences. Women have been generally underrepresented in the traditional cannon, and a feminist approach to literature exposes this problem (Burris, 2005).

The above are some of the definitions given to feminism by some feminist scholars. Feminists do not have a single definition in which they agree up on, but they have a common purpose that is the advocacy of women's right and a struggle to liberate women from any type of oppression which may be political, economic, religious and socio-cultural. The researcher also believes that their lack of a single definition may be due to their use of different theories because of its being a new concept having no single discipline. But the rise of feminism is undeniably one of the major events in the development of literary criticism in the 21 century. It has pushed forward both the theory of literary criticism and the understanding of individual works of literature as we shall see briefly below

Theoretical framework of the study: Feminist literary theory engages with the political and social goals of feminism, and it concentrates on literary culture and theory as a possible site of struggle and as a means of eventual change. Feminist literary criticism is also the critical tool for feminists approach to the patriarchal literary culture because it analyzes texts with respect to the ideologies of gender. It also focuses on how women in particular are represented in the system of gender relationships (Meese, 1990 and Wallace, 1997). Feminist literary criticism grew out of women's movement following WWII; it analyzes the representation of women in literature. Though the projects of individual critics differ, there is general agreement that their interpretation of literature involves

critique of patriarchy (ideology that privileges masculine ways of thinking [points of view] and marginalizes women politically, economically and psychologically. For some feminists who are under French feminists influence, project of interpretation is to expose patriarchal nature of language itself. While some others who are under influence of Anglo-American feminism explore texts in detail, demonstrating patriarchal patterns, or the complex response of women writers to their own authorial status (Peterson and Runyan, 1993). Liberal feminists engage in many kinds of strategies to erode or explode gender dichotomies. They are most active in equal rights movements and seek to eliminate these dichotomies by eliminating the emphasis on gender difference and replacing it with an emphasis on sameness. They argue that women are equal to men because they are essentially the same as men in regard to capacities for aggression, ambition, strength, and rationality. This argument is at odds with the idea that women are naturally the opposite of men. They also challenge the gendered division, but not the gendered notion of power. Moreover they reinforce the idea that power equals aggression, ambition, strength, and rationality (Peterson and Runyan, 1993).

Radical feminists' approach to gender inequality is quite different from liberal feminists. Rather than insisting that women are the same as men because they share masculine capabilities, radical feminists celebrate feminine traits and argue that men should adopt them. They also argue that masculinity with its emphasis on aggression and violence directed by men against women and men, as the problem, not the solution for liberating women and other subordinated groups (Peterson and Runyan, 1993). As cited in the same author same radical feminists have a strategy to revalue previously denigrated aspects of femininity, making them the norm to which all people should aspire in pursuit of a better world. They are often referred to as cultural feminists who seek to remove the negative connotations from such feminine traits as passivity, nurturance, emotionalism, and dependence; and also they seek to redefine them more positively. For example, women's purported passivity (destructive if it keeps them from acting politically against their oppression, and positive to the degree that it promotes a desire for accommodation and thus a nonviolent resolution of conflicts. Similarly, women's supposed tendency to nurture (problematic when it comes to binding women exclusively to reproductive labor, and is positive as an ethic of care that extends to children the poor and victimized, and the planet as a whole.

According to Peterson and Runyan (1993) Radical feminists also state that people and nature are bound up in webs of interdependency that entail responsibility and care for others. Due to this they insist that interdependency to be revalued and redefined in a way that promotes the establishment of mutually respectful relationships among women and men, among peoples, and with nature a mutual respect that also criticizes the inescapable interdependency of all life. They criticize women who depend on men in ways that too often leave the women victimized. They are critical of male defined pleasures and masculinity principles, and also the concept of heterosexism which assumes heterosexuality is the only "normal" and legitimate pattern of sexual and social relations. Moreover they are active in reproductive rights, gay and lesbian rights movements. In short they are not interested in being equal to men because they think being equal with men means becoming like or the same as male oppressors. Spiritual

feminists recognize that male dominated religion is the major factor in the legitimating and perpetuation of patriarchy. In relation to literary enterprise they contend that women challenge canonical texts and readings of those texts, and create new stories and modes of interpretation. While the types and aims of feminist spirituality vary widely, the major unifying principle is a desire to challenge patriarchal religious interpretations and to affirm women as spiritual beings and authorities concerning their own spiritual experience (Wallace, 1997).

Hermeneutic Interpretation: According to Abrams (1981), the term hermeneutics was originally used specifically to designate the interpretation of the Bible' including both the formulation of rules governing a valid reading of the Biblical text and exegesis, or commentary on the application of the meanings expressed in the text. It was designed to serve as the basis of interpretation of all forms of writing in the 'human sciences' that is, in literature, the humanities, and the social sciences, as distinguished from the natural sciences. The aim of hermeneutics is to establish a general theory of 'understanding' specifically textual understanding of a text, in this case it will be a proverb. That is, to understand the determinate meanings of the parts of any linguistic unit, we must approach them with a prior sense of the meaning of the whole; yet we can know the meaning of the whole only by knowing the unit of its constituent parts.

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study: Qualitative research design was used for this study. This is because it was believed to be suitable to interpret and thematically elucidate the existing gender related issues in Wolaita and ArsiOromo proverbs

Sampling Technique: For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling and the proverbs that represented motherhood typically were selected from Wolaita and Arsi Oromo proverbs.

Data Analysis: For the analysis of the proverbs, the researcher used qualitative method of data analysis. Then, he presented the results and discussion of the selected proverbs, and then analyzing and interpreting them within their representations of motherhood based on the theoretical framework of the study.

Analysis and discussion: Under this section the proverbs taken from Wolaita and ArsiOromowere analyzed critically based on the theoretical framework of this study.

Motherhood in Wolaita proverbs

Ayenenehaten eat bawa

There is no evil water and mother: A mother is appreciated in most of the proverbs of traditional societies like Wolaita. Water is life for all living creatures. Life without water is unthinkable. A mother is everything to her family in a traditional society. A mother is a teacher for her children at home to shape their character according to the society's cultural norms. She is also the protector of her family; she washes her children, their clothes, prepares their food safely. A mother also treats her children emotionally as a psychiatrist. What is emphasized through the above metaphor in the

proverb is to show the role of a mother as the source of life like water for her family.

If a mother is so important in a traditional society, we can use this to teach about how important women are for the welfare of society. Since today's girls are tomorrow's mothers the society has to be considerate to women from who spring warmth, love and life. Here motherhood is presented as a significant attribute of women. They should be appreciated for who they are. Hence if we love mothers we are expected to give respect to all women who are potential mothers. The Arsi Oromo also have the same proverb like the one that I have discussed above. Which says: "Haatiifbishanbadduhinqabani" which literally means: "There is no evil mother and water" According to Jeylan (2005) African proverbs reveal the essentiality of the mother in nurturing children and maintaining their nourishment. For example the Igbo say, "If a child starts learning to climb (trees), his/her mother starts learning to cry." This shows the existence of strong emotional connection between mother and her children. African proverbs also represent woman as the source of humankind; without which, life is impossible (Egejuru, 1997). To point out the life-enhancing quality of mothers, the Gikuyu of Kenya say, "The baby that refuses its mother's breast will never be full." The next proverb also shows how much compassionate a mother is to her child. Hayqedoneaayeyateneaqoreynauu were gewesu A mother, whose son died, says the neck of her babe is two arms long.

The proverb shows that for a mother her dead child is different from other children. Because of her compassion a mother might assume that her child is the best. The function of this proverb is to magnify a mother's love for her child. Mothers are respected and appreciated in most of the proverbs in a traditional society like the Wolaita people. For example the Arsi Oromo give greater respect to the mother than the father. They say: "Haatinamadeessi; abbaanwadalahrreeti.", "A mother is a child bearer; but a father is a male donkey." They appreciate women's capacity of bringing forth a child, but a father is considered as a male donkey who is not responsible for the life of his children. A child's upbringing falls heavily on mothers because at the initial stage, the child is closer to the mother than any other person. As stated by Lawal (2005) in most cases, the father is not always at home and the mother sees it as her responsibility to train her children. Besides she is the first agent of the child's socialization. This may be the reason why the child's first language is also referred to as the "mother tongue". Rewarding mothers also must be given due attention by their society because of the heavy responsibility they bear in educating their children especially in the rural areas. The next proverb also shows how much a mother loves her children when it is compared with the love they have towards her.

Nat kunedenayeyadegemeyogakeynahayeqennatdegamokone Children do not suffer badly when their mother dies, but she feels worse when they fall down (83). This proverb shows the depth of a mother's love towards her children. It does not mean that children do not feel at all at the death of their mother, but it means that the mother's love exceeds the love of children for their mother. The function of this proverb is to show the depth of mother's care for their children. If this is true the society must show respect for all women who are also potential mothers. As Jeylan (2004) and Oha (1998) stated the African oral traditions mostly portray women in general as foolish, weak, jealous, evil, unfaithful, dependent, frivolous and

seductive. However there is the other image of women as reflected in the above Wolaita proverb, which represents women as a symbol of warmth and nourishing goodness. In Wolaita society also motherhood has a special place and respect. For example the proverb which says: "They are responsible for your own actions gees"; "The better the mother, the wiser her daughter becomes". Almost all over Wolaita this proverb is commonly used to show the value of motherhood. Not only mothers are reflected as persons who love their children but they are also represented as people who are devoted to their children, as people who can sacrifice their comfort to promote the welfare of their children. Another proverb also shows the important place a mother has in Wolaita society. If a mother is poor she will bless her children so that they might have a better life. They say: "We are waiting for your appointment"; "What a poor mother do not lack is a passionate wish for her children". This shows how much valuable a mother is to her children in their moral development.

Like the Wolaita people a mother is also respected in other societies. For example the term "mother" is considered as an honorable form of address and one which is desired by every woman in Gikuyu society. When a woman reaches the stage of motherhood she is highly respected, not only by her children but by all members of the community. Her name becomes sacred and she is addressed by her neighbors and their children as "mother of so and so." There are also proverbs that depict women as lovable, generous and tolerant among the Oromo society (Berhanu and Sena, 2008). Some proverbs consider a woman the most important member of the family. For instance, the Oromo proverb, 'Kanhaatigabaabaatefkanhaatijalaaduutewalqixabooyu,' The child whose mother went to the market and whose mother was dead, cry equally". Of course the proverb is uttered to indicate the two events are more far apart from each other, and being unaware of this reality the child cries for its mother but not as such for its father. This is used when children cry because their mothers are away and out of sight and also when two people complain equally for unequal misfortunes. The proverb also shows how much a child is attached to its mother in a traditional society. Like the Wolaita people the Arsi Oromo also have a great respect for motherhood.

Motherhood in Arsi Oromo Proverbs: I have analyzed nine proverbs that deal about women as mothers because they have the same qualities or themes. While collecting the data among the Arsi Oromo's I could not find any proverb that negatively represent women as mothers; but step mothers were represented negatively with an exception. Here are the nine proverbs dealing with mothers:

Haatinamadeessi; abbaanwadalahrreeti.

A mother is a child bearer; but a father is a maledonkey.

Haadhailaaliintalafuudhi.

Evaluate the mother and marry her daughter.

Michuhaadhaormaarrabadduuhadhaaofiwayya

A bad mother is better than a good step mother

Haatiofikafanaofiiti.

A mother is one's own dress.

Hadhaaduutee manna haadhamaraatewayya

A mad mother is better than the dead one

Haatiifbishanbadduuhinqabani

There is no evil mother and water

Namnihaadhaqabunamawaqaqabu

Having a mother is having God's love

Abbaangindo'o; haatigingilcha'a.

A father is rigid like a flat winnowing basket (impermissible), and a mother is flexible or tolerant like a sieve. Namniafurgolatokkogalu: abbaamurtii, shiftaa,hattuu fi maraattuu; kana hundaakanhorattuhaadha.

Four types of men dwell in a house: a lawyer, a bandit, a thief and a crazy; but a Mother handles them all. All of the above proverbs magnify the quality of a mother to a higher level, to the extent of perfection. Women as a mother are respected and honored as a special being. In the proverbs listed mothers are presented with a better identity than fathers. For example proverb number one appreciates women's capacity of bearing a child, but it also says that a father does nothing but is like a male donkey that does not take the responsibility like bearing children and feeding them. Proverb number eight also appreciates the character of a mother as a flexible being symbolizing her with a sieve to show her kindness when compared with men, those who are presented as rigid or firm in their stand or character. This does not mean of course that all men are rigid and all women are soft, but the majority of women may be flexible when compared with men. We cannot also conclude that flexibility is more important than firmness, because those characters are important based on circumstances that we face. For instance if women are always soft and flexible, this might cause them to accept the challenges they face from the society as something not that much harmful. If they are firm in their stand against any form of discrimination they can change them. So any character could not be totally important and irrelevant but the situation matters, flexibility is good for peaceful coexistence and for conflict resolution, firmness is also important in terms of legal issues to protect human rights and to punish those who are illegal; may be to those who are against women's right. Let us see the other proverbs about motherhood to understand how much value has been given for them for being a mother. Proverb number two is about marriage advice. According to Arsi Oromo, if one wants to marry a girl he has to know her mother's character very well, because a mother is considered to be a teacher for her daughter. If the mother is hard worker, the daughter is expected to be the same, if she is lazy, and then the same result is expected to happen. So, a mother is basic in her daughter's life, she can shape her in the way she is. From this proverb it is possible to see that women are crucial in a society's development, because if women are illiterate they will not be productive at any point, as a mother women can shape or teacher her children at home those things that are very important in life. This shows that giving more attention for teaching today's women, tomorrow's mothers is very crucial to change their life and our country in general.

Proverb number three compares a bad mother with a good stepmother, and gives more value to the bad mother to show how much a mother is very important to her children. Proverb number four also likens a mother with a cloth which covers once nakedness. Proverb number five also expresses the importance of a mother by preferring her existence even being mad is better than the dead one. When we come to number six, it puts that there is no bad mother like water. Here motherhood is given the highest quality that disproves other proverbs assumption of putting women as evil, because all mothers are women. Hence if we love mothers we are expected to give the respect all women deserves as potential mothers and as part of

the community that needs our support because of what they have suffered in the past. Proverb number seven is somehow different because it says that having a mother is having God or God's love. This proverb gives women a divine character which is beyond humanity. That means if we have a mother we lack nothing, because a mother is like God. Finally proverb number nine shows a mother's ability of handling or managing a family where different behavior is manifested that are good and bad which do not go together like: a thief, a bandit, a crazy and a lawyer. In short in the above proverbs analyzed thematically motherhood is respected and revered in all directions among the Wolaita and Arsi Oromo. They were negatively represented only as a step mother in some proverbs. This positive attitude towards women as a mother could be used as a weapon to fight against any form of discrimination against women in a traditional society. Since mothers are also women, the society must respect women as they greatly respect mothers in their society.

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 represent 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, with the exception of women as mothers. Most of the men who oppose the equality of women with men are aged and illiterate. But in almost all the proverbs of the Wolaita and Arsi Oromo people mothers were given a special place and highly respected. Even though women are not respected in most of the proverbs of a traditional society, unquestionably mothers are not only considered as the equals of men, but they are the most respected and revered part of the society both among the Wolaita and Arsi Oromo people. This clearly shows that both society differently treat mothers than the other women in their community. Because of this becoming a mother is appreciated and if women did not get married they will be considered as the most desperate section of the society. Here we have to also know that to be a mother of a baby boy brings more respect in the community than to be a mother of a baby girl. But in any case to be a mother is to be respected, while the respect depends on the type of children the mother gives birth. Moreover women as a girl, wife and mother are treated differently in the proverbs of the two societies.

Among the Arsi Oromo's and the Wolaita people's culture there are lots of good things about women regarding motherhood as it could be observed in the proverbs analyzed in this paper, encouraging those positive ideas about motherhood, 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 our society.

Recommendations

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 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 thinking brings on women. Using the culture of the society to solve Gender related problems is very effective in a traditional country like Ethiopia where the majorities of the people live in the countryside and believe in their religions and culture more than science and modern way of life. The Governments Media like ETV's, regional FM's are not giving enough time for Gender issues. Rather they give more time for the governments' propaganda and other less relevant issues like European football while women are dying because of gender related problems in the country. Therefore the Media should be used properly to the advantage of women in the country to change the society's attitude towards them.

At the family level things also should be changed in order to solve the problems women face in the country by developing systems like the health extension package which health professionals go house to house and solve problems of health in the countryside areas. 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 the positive issues related with gender issues.

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