



Full length research paper

**Exploration of Bale Oromo's Indigenous Value Systems for Bringing up Children:
The Case of Robe and Goba Towns**

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Received October 15, 2018

Accepted February 2, 2019

Published June, 2019

Abstract

The ultimate purpose of this study was to explore the most important assumption and practices of value systems that Bale Oromo have accumulated through years for bringing up their children. In the course of this assessment, issues like what these values themselves primarily are and the ways the value are being practiced. The research design was descriptive research which mainly utilizes an in depth interview. The informants were selected through some gate keepers (old men, old women) from Robe and Goba Towns. 12 informants with ages ranging from 70-100 years were sampled purposely. 100 students of Grade 7 and 8 children were also selected as informants for responses in questionnaire from 5 schools. Furthermore, data analysis was made using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A few data collected with questionnaire and in depth interview were discussed through percentage and qualitatively. Almost all parent informants responded that they agree with the importance of indigenous values and they attempt to teach their children although their children fail to listen to them. The data collected with the help of the two tools were also organized thematically. The discussions in in-depth interviews with parents revealed that in spite of their great ambition and effort they are now in despair to teach our values to our children because the children are already occupied with western culture. The children themselves again showed that although they need their parents' values they are already controlled with modern culture to the extent it is hard for them to give attention to their indigenous values. The results of the study indicated that the old persons and their children hardly pay due attention in practicing and developing indigenous values. Accordingly, it is recommended that elders, the community leaders, religious institutions teachers and other government bodies should cooperatively create continuous forum for identifying the gap, planning to equip their children with necessary indigenous value systems that can help the children acquire moral standards, ethical norms to play their roles in the efforts of economic, social and political attainment goals of the society.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, Moral, Oromo community, Society, Value, Youth

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Introduction

Human being is the active actor in the social world. For the reason that human being has endowed dynamic mind, he can work on nature for his/her existence. His power to struggle on the world is from his innate conscious which he/she has gradually improved so that he/she can win the changing world. Human beings had accumulated common sense knowledge from ancient times which gradually enabled them to systematize his knowledge that lead him to the scientific researches of today. Through times institutions were established to teach knowledge to citizens.

Today human being has reached to the level of the advancement of science and technology that could control some of the natural challenges that were facing human beings though there are many puzzles that have yet remained unanswered. Regardless of fast growing of scientific and technological advancement and increasing human luxury lives, so many scholars have begun to prove the necessity of utilizing indigenous knowledge that human being have accumulated through long life experience. This indigenous knowledge broadly include skills of using natural resources around him such as cultivating land and producing crops, fruits, vegetables, etc. Human being has also gained some indigenous knowledge which helps him develop to use nature wisely and live together peacefully.

There have been rapid science and technological advancement since 19th century. Through these advancements the influence of globalization is highly affecting the society, education, etc. Prior to 19th century science practices were centered on moral and religion values along with appreciation of philosophical and metaphysical aspects of science education. At the same time most societal activities were supporting and were supported by such science practices. But some of present scientific knowledge systems have come to violate the religious, moral and value systems (Witz, 1996). Indigenous value system is

an integral part of the culture and history of local society in different part of the world. These knowledge systems serve society across the world to depend on their indigenous knowledge to solve their day to day socio economic problems, address various environmental challenges and adapt to the changes.

When the meaning of development was believed to be primarily interpreted from the society's perspectives, alternative knowledge such as indigenous knowledge has begun getting due attention among social workers, economists and politicians. Dunn (1987) emphasizes these claims saying that the acceptance of indigenous knowledge in development is apparently to be welcomed as it represents a shift from preoccupation with the centralized, technically oriented solutions of the past decades that failed to alter life prospects for majority of the peasants and small farmers of the world. As different literatures revealed and the actual practices indicate, the roles of indigenous knowledge is of great importance in every activities of the society, especially when sustainable development is thought of. Therefore, these vital importance of the indigenous knowledge can possibly leads to the relevance and the urgency of revitalizing indigenous knowledge. Anyhow these arguments are more elaborated by (Schwartz *et al.*, 2001; Hangarter, 2013; Mawere, 2015). These scholars suggest that there should be efforts for institutionalization of indigenous knowledge through conferences, development plans and broad grudging, acceptance by the development communities of its assumed inherent values as part of a shift in addressing the direct concern of the poor.

On the other hand, the most piteous condition is the absence of parents' inability to transfer these indigenous knowledge to their children. Elders have a great deal of indigenous knowledge which can primarily capacitate youth in order to develop with self-efficient personalities at least at the level of his/her contexts. As youth are at the local levels can be basis for countries' development in

J. Equity Sci. & Sust. Dev.

all spheres, youth should inherit problem solving indigenous knowledge from their parents. This is because such knowledge as a social capital can help the youth to understand and practice to get life skill to win his survival.

Though the societies of the world may share the endangerment of indigenous knowledge useful for themselves and for their offspring's, the developing countries can take the lion share. Africans can be cited as the first victims of these crises for Africans were colonized for several years. The colonizers left them with inculcating their culture, value and other knowledge generation systems in the name of scientific knowledge and civilization claiming that it is the only method for solving the human and naturally occurring problems. Therefore, these European deep rooted cultures could not simply be cancelled out of our society's mind. To make the situation worse, the present global technological information explosion have already built the mental makeup of our children to the extent that it is causing an identity crisis.

Just like other countries Ethiopia has also its own indigenous knowledge. The major ones include as Higgins and Morely (2014) list cooperation, bravery, politeness hospitality, wisdom, patriotism, bravery (heroism), politeness(courtesy), hospitality, tolerance for differences of opinion, familial orientation, etc. On the contrary, the author has mentioned that child rearing practices indicate that parents, particularly the fathers are authoritarian, physical punishment to discipline children is widely used, children are to obey parents in all circumstances, and there is a lack of adequate verbal interaction between children and adults. He added that the values and child rearing practices listed above are found in all or most parts of the country, at least in the Amhara, Oromo, Tigraway, Gurage, Sidama, Somale, Hadiya, Afar, Wolaita, Gamo, Kaffacho, Selti, Kembatta, Dawro, and Gedeo cultures. Moreover, he noted that some of these values and practices would be in violation of human rights standard.

Although there are some values which can violate the human rights / child rights in some areas they are now a days declining due to modern education and media influences. The government has also made some efforts together with NGOs. For examples, circumcision of female children, cutting of tonsils, marrying at their early stages and even without their will making them leave schools. Oromia has also various useful indigenous knowledge that include appreciating truth, hard works, cooperation, tolerance, respect for life etc. these are among many universal values systems which Ethiopia and Oromia and again shared commonly by Bale Oromo. Anyhow, before arguing on the values Oromo people has in general and Bale Oromo in particular it seems relevant to begin from what ethics, moral and values are.

Every society has ethics, moral and values standards toward human relationships and towards other organisms, but what do these terms mean briefly for our topic under discussions. Ethics always describe the theoretical, systematic, and rational reflection on the human behavior. It is a well-established branch of philosophy which studies the source of human values and moral standards. Moral refers to human behavior and morality refers to it practical activities. Morality is an accepted code of human conduct in a society. Morality entails "having laws that will regulate dealings of men who can choose to abide by these laws because they know it is good sense to do so" Being moral or being morally conscious means adopting standards or principles to guide ones' actions and conduct in society. Moral education is a program of study which teaches the pupil about behaving in accordance with what is good while rejecting the bad. It is a holistic approach to stimulate character building and moral development Moral education should lead youths to develop from a stage of anomie; often characterized by pre-morality to a stage where an individual is not forced to be moral and is personally convinced on standards that ought to guide his/her conduct in society. Values are

linked to belief and attitude and guide human behavior. Anyhow, these three are recommended to have common background interpretations (Churchill, 1982; Bridgewater, 2000; Okoh; 2003; Rennie, 2007; Prott *et al.*, 2010).

Osaat (2004) in Ekpiwre (2008) defines values as “things considered worthwhile, desirable, right and good and thus craved for and applied on a daily basis to enhance existence by the people”. Values determine people identity and cultural continuity. Moral values are essential values that determine individuals’ perception of morality and moral consciousness in society. Moral values include truthfulness, patience, obedience, honesty, integrity, hard work, responsibility, respect, tolerance, loyalty, public spiritedness, freedom, respect for human life and dignity of persons. Others include justice, fairness and equality.

Just as other people Oromo has moral value that Bale Oromo shares with other Oromo. These moral and values do regulates people’s daily activities (Østebø, 2009). To this effect, values tend to encourage the policy of mutual respect among people; teach the boundaries that should exist among people and the family members; inform the family members about what is right and wrong, desirable and undesirable; and indicate how one has to behave in relation to others, where, of course, acting against this established value is considered as breaking the norm. Generally, in light of these values of Bale, a wife is expected to establish strong ties with, be loyal and obedient not only to her husband, but also to her in-laws, to her husband’s entire clan, lineage and relatives. Moreover, as values are believed to regulate the Oromo/Bale people’s activities and the way of life, they also exert significant influences on their parenting activities (Alemayehu, 2009). Aminigo and Nwaokugha (2006) also defined parental values as desirable goals that people hold, aspire to achieve, pass onto others, and that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives.

This is to mean that values determine the pattern of interaction among children and parents, inform parents of what they should instill into their children (parental values), the beliefs that they hold about raising children and how they should actually deal with their children (parental behavior). It also means that values as the basic Oromo cultural norm that was rooted within the basic Gada values determines which values to stress, which norms to follow in raising children, how children should be raised to keep and maintain the values and norms embedded in their culture, and how children should be taught to respect their parents and elders by being obedient.

Conflicting Values of the Past and Present Society is dynamic not static and as societies change from simple traditional societies to complex modern societies; people, values, trends and activities also change. For instance, traditional African societies where relatively simple with no literary heritage (Boven and Morohasi, 2002) as oral transmission was what was in vogue as opposed to the modern African societies which have been greatly influenced by the Western world and is more advanced with a lot of literary collections on an array of subjects. Just as societies have developed, values have also continued to change to suit the character of a changing world which has brought in an increased wave of moral decadence and moral laxity in present day societies.

There seem many gaps in the knowledge of indigenous knowledge such as moral (safuu) and values (dhuudhaalee) of their own among the elders and children in bale around Robe and Goba Towns which can possibly represent Oromia. Although some of the present elders are potentially know their safuu and dhuudhaalee, most of them hardly seem to know them deeply. As the presenters of this paper are part of this community, it is heard that most elders are not confident when they are asked to tell exactly what safuu and dhuudhaa are. The some reason among many reasons can be they didn’t learn

these practices of knowledge from their father and forefathers or they have forgotten them, or since the context in which these knowledge don't allow them to implement the practices could be forgotten. Moreover, the western cultures through formal education religions, media could have influence to them to the extent it can be endangered. The worst of all failure for the dying of even these social capital lies have not mostly transmitted to the present youth groups. Most causes of the youths' failure to know these cultural safuu and dhuudhaa can be similar with that of the elders mentioned above for the reason that factors do relate to each other.

It is common to hear and see that our youngsters are observed violating their fathers' safuu and dhuudhaa in their daily activities to the extent the elders are hopeless to expect these behaviors from their children. Therefore, the gradual absence of attempts for preserving these safuu and dhuudhaa practices is leading to the loss of cultural identity of this community. The loss of obeying these safuu and dhuudhaa has brought the present society to host different crimes because the breaking of safuu and dhuudhaa has already ended in the communication barriers between the generations' age groups. Since children and youth don't listen to their parents, they hardly know what the benefits of respecting hard work, utilization of time, cooperation, honesty, inspiration for knowledge, loving country, etc. The absence of these in turn has caused some age groups to look for alternatives life styles like short cut life successes. Therefore, such prevalent deterioration of safuu and dhuudhaa in our surrounding has triggered us to prepare and present paper for the reader to initiate deep discussion and motivate the concerned body to critically recognize the challenges and plan for the urgent solution and act accordingly before the worst problem to come. Therefore, the objective of the study is to explore Bale Oromo's indigenous value systems practiced by parents for bringing up their children in Robe and Goba towns.

Materials and Methods

Descriptive research design was employed since it is pertinent for the study at hand. Furthermore, two instruments were used for the successful accomplishment of the study: interview and questionnaire. As it is quite difficult to include all the population into the study, the researchers took a sample of student respondents from five second cycle primary schools through simple random sampling methods, and elders from the towns. The researchers utilized two of the instruments to obtain reliable and rich data from respondents, namely interview with 12 elderly persons from Robe and Goba towns. Besides, 100 students of grade 7 and 8 (from Galema, Ali Birra , Mada Walabu, Urji Berisa and Harewa Sinja) using simple random sampling method. All the elders were interviewed using semi-structured interview system where the researchers easily pose questions one after the other based on interviewees responses. These also led to gather pertinent data for the designed objectives.

The data collected from respondents using the two techniques were organized into sections according to their meaning relations to make vivid discussion for the readers to understand better the issues. They were discussed through narration by giving due emphasis to each points raised by researchers and explained by interviewees. The open ended responses of the students' also added here to make the discussion unbiased and valid.

Results and Discussions

As most scholars recommends indigenous knowledge helps the society for acting up their environment. In the interaction with their environment they naturally come up with continuous changeable and complex challenges to win their life. These continuous and hard some encounter with their surrounding give them chance to accumulate a good deal of knowledge of their own. It such knowledge that enable the community of some kind to survive with their environment. These are the interactions that

empower the inhabitants to fulfill their basic needs. While these interactions help them to lead their life, there are other indigenous that society accumulated through their lives to live in harmony.

Among these indigenous knowledge a society owns are some social capitals which includes truthfulness, respect for others, hard work, respect for life, tolerance and cooperation. These are of course values which can be considered as universal values. As such values can consistently be part all society's in the world, it is expected to be recognized and practiced in a society like Oromo of Bale, Oromia State, Ethiopia. Although such existing values are potentially found in the society, in our case, Bale Oromo, they are now a day deteriorating among youth groups which the main purpose of this study concerned with. In order to reach on the final finding of the research the following result and discussion was dealt with using the data gathered from the old group and youth of Robe and Goba Towns.

1. Knowledge of Values Parents and Children

Concerning parents' awareness in the depth interview about 'what is value and what are the major values of Oromo of Bale and around Robe and Goba towns' which is to mean Dhuudhaa fi Safuu jechuun maalii? Dhuudhaa leengurguddo Oromo Baalee fi naannawa magaalalee Roobee fi Goobbaa), they responded the following comments.

Dhuudhaa (value) is the principles that the society members should know what are to be accepted as right and wrong and to be applied in their daily lives. These values are guiding rules to be implemented in their daily interactions among their society. These are society's standard to judge on someone whether he is right or wrong in their in order to live in the society. As they said there are some differences between dhuudha and safuu. Dhuudhaa has broad application in

their daily lives as compared to safuu. Dhuudhaa is less serious than safuu and less application in the sphere of usage. Safuu is more specific in a daily usage and more serious than dhuudhaa. Safuu is used for examples violating the rule of God and showing some offensive and embarrassing acts. They cite some examples such as doing sex with relatives. Threatening or insulting or beating parents in some quarrelling times than accepting the parents' punishment is considered as violating the dhuudhaa .

These questions were also posed to the children, but of 80 children only 13% tried to answer the questions as their parents defined. Among the 13 %, 2 % of children explained the terms almost as their parents responded.

2. Ijoolee dhuudhaa leenkunneen barsiisun hangam fayyadaa? How does teaching these values to children help?

Concerning these questions almost all the elders said that it is very necessary to teach these safuu and dhuudhaa to their children. As they put it a son or a daughter who doesn't obey their parents' safuu and dhuudhaa shouldn't be considered as ones' a son / a daughter. Because parents are proud of their children when they know and follow their parents' culture. The interviewees explained further saying that one of the main reasons to give birth to children is to replace parents when they pass away. Otherwise, they said, parents should not say we have children. One of the interviewees emphasized this idea, "the medicine for death is giving birth to a child." But if the child doesn't inherit his parents' identity how one can say I have children. If we teach our children our own culture they can have good manners and can simply communicate and understand each other with the parents among the family and community.

J. Equity Sci. & Sust. Dev.

The question was also given to the children and they almost all of them (100%), said that learning their parents safuu and dhuudhaa help them in their lives. But rather than answering this question positively, no one explained how it can help them in their lives. They simply responded it is our culture.

3. Dhuudhaalee kanneen hangam barsiistu? How often do you teach these values to your children?

The parents commented this question in the following ways. Their responses were almost the same. Although we need to teach our safuu and dhuudhaa to our children they don't give attention to our teachings. These parents said that they always tell their children to listen to them and learn and even apply these safuu and dhuudhaa in their lives but they rarely have patience to listen to us. We begin such discussions at coffee ceremony but although seem to listen to us they immediately forget it. Our children hardly fear and respect us. We attempt teaching these norms. While we start telling them indigenous knowledge we have they quickly compete with us to tell us what they know from current knowledge sources like classrooms, media, etc.

The children didn't give detail explanation on this issue. They said that our parents don't teach us properly. They only complain why we don't know and obey our safuu and dhuudhaa. They always comment us that we don't know anything about our culture and we are useless generation. They also tell us that the generation can be fruitful in their lives. They always say that our generation can help parents, relatives, neighbors, community and country. When they call us non sense generation we gradually became hopeless and ignore them to listen to them and learn from them.

The responses from the parents and their children seem to show some gaps. There seem some problems to understand, to

tolerate and to take time to listen to each other to learn and teach each others.

4. Yaalii dhuudhaalee kanneen ijoollee keessan barsiisuu gufuulee jiranmaal fa'a? Falliisaa yoomaalta'uu qaba? What are the challenges in attempts to teach these values to your children? What do you think could be the solution?

These questions were only given to the parents. Each interviewee had their own reaction to these questions the major responses were the following.

The modern education brought incurable disease on our children to learn our safuu and dhuudhaa. The schools teach the modern knowledge and they don't teach our culture. There are very few rules of our own which are taught at school, or these young teachers even don't consult us what to teach and what isn't to be taught. They themselves wear the wearing styles which doesn't relate with our original culture. Most of teachers' hair style has also the same problems. Some interviewees surprisingly responded in a question form, "Do you think these teachers teaches our norms to our children in the classrooms?" the second point the respondents emphasized was influence media such as drama on TV,, film, drama. Our children language and their wearing, and hair styles have already changed to these media. One of the interviewees even specifically mentioned the channel of 'Zara and Chandra' and football games as an example. Most of the elders commented very furiously when these issues were raised. They said these channels seemed to be planned to kill the generation because most of the youngsters through twenty hours sit idle watching these channels. One of them even humriously said the influence of 'Zara and Chandra' even controlled the old man and women to the extent that they could forget their meals. They finally commented that there is no one trying to solve these problems than appreciating these challenges just like we and you are doing now. One of

them even emotionally asked me, “have you any remedy to solve these problems?”

These elders were also asked to suggest on possible solution for these challenges. Most of them said there can be solution if we cooperate with all the concerned body. They confidently elaborated if continuous forum discussion with relevant community sections are made and the government and schools support and guide, these all problems can at least minimize these challenges and can balance the indigenous knowledge and the modern education in the way they can side by side support country’s development and the peaceful relationships among family members, society and the citizens. They said this is because we have experiences of mediating problems more serious than these. But still there seems some fear from few participants who are desperate for controlling the present identity crisis of the youth.

These discussions with the elders indicate that the problems are very serious and multifaceted nature to solve. The global information explosion, its uncontrolled exposure to the generation has brought severe problems to us all. The relationship among the curriculum designers, the teachers, parents and their children has played it share in deterioration of safuu and dhuudha in our community. Most of the discussion participants had positive expectation in controlling the most irrelevant moral values standards.

5. Dhuudhaalee badaa jiran kanneen baraaruf carraaqiin eenyurra barbaadamaa? Whose effort is needed for saving such values from endangerment?

When this question was posed to the parents, most of the elders emphasized the responsibilities of the government bodies that have different responsibilities at different levels. Since the government bodies have the responsibilities and can control the concerned bodies in the structures, the government bodies have to design policies

and strategies that can alleviate the problems. In presence of effective policies and strategies government bodies can control, evaluate the implementation and even take measures before going to the worst stages. The government can even selected, motivate and support experts to identify the challenges and recommend the solutions. They recommend the second responsibilities to lie on the schools and intellectuals in them. Since the teachers are at the closest position to the lesson contents and the children (the students in our case), teachers should comment the government, curriculum designers and the parents in indicating the failure trends together with their solutions. Finally the elders took the responsibilities to themselves and to different community such as religious men and leaders and others famous persons.

The above suggestions indicate that these threatening challenges can only be solved with cooperative discussion and immediate measures of the concerned bodies like government, curriculum designers, schools, parents, some other intellectuals.

6. Dhuudhaaleen kunneen hammayyummaa irratti hangam dhiibbaa fiduu? How far do values have impact on modernization?

This question was great challenge to the elders to comment on because as they said what we recommend to be good lesson for our children what you and school say good may not coincide. They said it is difficult to recommend before deep discussion with the wider society. Anyhow, they said modern education can bring determinant influence on our culture. Therefore, they commented to be studied further with specialist and famous communality leaders.

The general and final question posed to the parents was what are the major useful safu and dhuudhaa you recommend to your children? Their response can be presented in the following categories.

1. Braveness, hardworking and honesty

They elaborated my children should be brave, hardworking and honest. A son or a daughter shouldn't come home and tell parents their being defeated when they are beaten by their peer groups. They believe that if the children don't practice defend themselves and they cannot protect their right in their future lives. They also said that their children should respect work because if they don't work in their live and this can lead them to be thieves in the society which is very embarrassing to their parents and the rest of community.

2. Cooperativeness and tolerance

Parents said that the children should learn and have habit of socializing with others such neibours and the wider society. Since human being cannot live alone he/she should help other because he/she will also take something from other in the bad times. They expresses in their proverb that read, ' Mukni tokko qophaa hinboba'u', which is to mean a single stick of firewood cannot burn. They added another proverb to express it more. 'Kanqophaanyaatu qophaattidu'a', which means he who eats alone dies alone. Concerning the tolerance they reminded the interviewers one proverb that read, 'Diina keehir'isuuf itti naraarami', which means in order to minimize your enemy comprise with him. The elders said that each community members should tolerate each other's for all our sons of God.

3. Care for life and true testimony

The respondent highly recommended that our children must not kill the lives of human. They believe when someone kill another he will also be killed by main in his life time. They believe that God pay the killer the same punishment. They also said that children should testify the

truth when they are called to give evidence to a judge in the court. Because when one gives false testimony, he will be judge on the judgment by God. The elders even commented that children should not cut down young trees and kill some animals.

4. Respect of parents and other human being.

According to the elders' suggestion children should respect their parents because parents are the second creators to God. In social interaction too, children should respect each other because human beings are a creatures of God.

Conclusion

There are a lot of local indigenous value systems that assist the society for bringing up children properly from different perspectives. But these value systems are not handed down from generation to generation with words of mouth as well as in school curriculum adequately. Although a few elders made an attempt to share the value systems to their children, the children are not willing to give attention to them since they are attracted to western modernization. It is understood that bringing up children is not the task to be left for one group; but as it is the cumulative effort of: neighbors, schools, parents and citizens a whole as it is asserted through this study.

This study has come up with the potential and practical importance of the indigenous value systems in bringing up children in Bale Oromo with particular reference to Robe and Goba towns. The study recommended: There should be an increased collaboration and attachment among parents-children and parents-school to use indigenous value systems properly for our country's social, economic and cultural development. Children's should respect their own value systems in all aspects like in the respect they have for elders, ethical norms, dressing style, conserving natural resources, conflict

resolution, mediation, time usage, language and identity as much as possible to be themselves in this global world. Today, there is a grave risk that much of the indigenous value systems is being lost. Thus, it is advisable to integrate into education and thereby bring the benefits of assisting to boost respect for local culture, its wisdom and its ethics and provides ways of teaching and learning them at large. The government should also plan to include adequate indigenous value systems into the curricula of civics and ethical education, language, history and others to shape the next generation successfully.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared there is no any conflict of interest regarding this article.

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