



## Indigenous Marriage and Family Counseling among Oromo Community in Ethiopia

### Casamento indígena e aconselhamento familiar entre a comunidade Oromo na Etiópia

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**ABSTRACT:** Semi-structured interview and FGD was employed to extract information from thirteen respondents selected purposefully. The result of the study disclosed that marriage and family counseling is a tradition among Oromo community right after shaving of born hair. Mostly, the father takes responsibility of the male and mother follows her daughter. 'Kuchu' and engagement counseling, and knowledge of blessing and curse are among the major areas of concern. Consequently, principles of marriage and family counseling, procedures and ages of application are fundamental. Incorporating indigenous knowledge and skills of counseling in education curriculum and training for its sustainability was recommended for upgrading.

**KEYWORDS:** family counseling; indigenous counseling; marriage counseling.

**RESUMO:** Entrevista semiestruturada e FGD foi empregada para extrair informações de treze entrevistados selecionados propositalmente. O resultado do estudo revelou que o aconselhamento matrimonial e familiar é uma tradição entre a comunidade Oromo logo após a depilação dos cabelos nascidos. Principalmente, o pai assume a responsabilidade do homem e a mãe segue a filha. 'Kuchu' e aconselhamento de engajamento, e conhecimento de bênção e maldição estão entre as principais áreas de preocupação. Conseqüentemente, os princípios de aconselhamento matrimonial e familiar, procedimentos e idades de aplicação são fundamentais. A incorporação de conhecimentos indígenas e habilidades de aconselhamento no currículo educacional e treinamento para sua sustentabilidade foi recomendada para atualização.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** aconselhamento familiar; aconselhamento indígena; aconselhamento matrimonial

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a special relationship and arrangement between people involved in the act. When we compare marriages in different societies and different historical periods, that marital partners everywhere have very definite duties toward each other. Family is the basic unit of society. It is a group of people who are usually related by birth, marriage or adoption (Minnet, 2001). It must consist of a male acting as father, a female as the mother and a child in most cases.

Marriage counseling can be a valuable addition to any relationship since: it gives each person involved fundamental tools and healthy coping strategies to manage their communication, show respect for each other, and grow in healthy ways (Lisa, 2012). These duties may not always be spelled out in detail, but they are well understood and readily enforced in each case (Gemechu & Assefa, 2006).

Marriage counseling works with couples in a joint therapy setting; this helps couples: communicate their feelings, thoughts, and perspective about a situation in a neutral setting with a therapist nearby for guidance and support. Counselors and therapists can help each individual learn to share their feelings with honesty and communicate these ideas effectively to the other person (OnlineCounselingProgram, 2017).

Open communication with the therapist can be critical for growth, and marriage counseling helps couples take part in regular sessions to determine and address the root cause of the problem (Teressa, 2017). In other ways, Ethiopia as one of a country with vigorous cultural diversity, can have its own – method of teaching the growing children, correcting and directing them in the socially accepted manner; ways of eating, dressing, drinking, requesting, acting, talking or interaction; beliefs and religious ceremonies, guiding and leading, how to respect and being respected and other relevant issues of life that has not been yet studied to the level required.

Most of the culture based values, assets and standards of life didn't get attention from responsible bodies, especially elites, since - most of them/us are only oriented to westerners culture of research. But, this research undertaking efforts as to dig out what was dumped in the community where any counseling application needs knowledge of client's attitude, feelings, belief system and way of life. Accordingly, the researchers identified Oromia Regional State as one of the prosperous area in maintaining indigenous knowledge like Gadaa rituals, rules and regulations of Gadaa administration,

'Siinqee', concept of 'eebaa vs abaarsaa' (blessing vs. curse), 'safuu' and others which assist the community as to maintain stable life. Oromo community considers marriage as an institution which needs careful involvement of family in addition to the couple's interest to one another. Hence, counseling is carry on from early life based on family cohesion, respect, mutual understanding, sharing of responsibility, reputations and communication standards at different strata. Hence, these and related conditions forced the researchers to focus on exploring cultural endeavors made by elders and 'hayyu' (elites) in counseling family and marriage among Oromo society in Ethiopia.

Traditional counselors assume counseling as an asset of the community that emanates from the society and designed to serve the community. They prefer to say it as indigenous knowledge and skill of the community than assuming as personal talent when viewed by the community and even from the elder counselor's point of view. The skill gained is understood as the attribute of the community like: child rearing practices, community rituals, Gadaa administration, the 'Qaalluu – kalu' (wise) and wisdom like Oromo calendar based on lunar system (Gadaa Melba, 1988).

Marriage and family formation is understood as one of the foremost occasion (birth, marriage, death) in human development among Oromo community of Ethiopia. In fact, all ethnic diversity in Ethiopia shares similar view in marriage and family establishment. But, the title they attach to family, how they get in to the process of marriage, respect and value attached to kinfolk, the counseling and involvement elders have in family life varies from ethnic group to the other. For example, Oromo community give due attention to family and follow every steps in their relationship since Gadaa as Oromo administrative system allow elders to lead, guide and facilitate conditions as to see, evaluate and direct life of extended family structures. Teaching, sharing of experience and discussion could be done headed by a husband in their respective homes during heating fire (night), meal preparation and dinning (night) and on walks. Senior elders' advice and counsel parents during dusk while herds comeback to home, on group works (daboo, jigii, daadoo, gargaarsaa (support) and ceremonies. Elder counselors and Gada leaders are the heads of general assembly and responsible to counsel, guide and intervene when reports reach them and situations demand their intervention. Therefore, there is strong tie and horizontal and vertical relationships among the community as to maintain their members life on the right truck of relationship, interaction and agreement in family and community settings across the areas before years. This system is still working and alive in our study areas even if it is

under jeopardy in some parts of Oromia Regional State due to many confounding factors among which cultural diffusion and dominance of ethnic minority in the country was/is rampant.

The gap existing between the need of the community to bring forth all the matters neglected there, which are transferred through oral communication vis-à-vis professional's interest to rely on more of standardized Westerners tools made the difference too significant. So, the purpose was an intention to explore indigenous counseling system employed to family and marriage among Oromo community as to fill this huge gap.

**Research Questions:** Based on the aforementioned analysis, the following research questions were suggested to discover answer in the study.

- Is there any system of indigenous family counseling (couples, children, adolescents and adults) among Oromo community?
- What counseling techniques and methods are in use in the indigenous marriage and family counseling system?
- How does family who needs support communicate with indigenous counselors in the community settings?

**Objectives of the Study:** The main purpose of this research undertaking was to explore indigenous family and marriage counseling techniques and methods available in the community.

The *specific objectives* were the following:

- To find out if there is any form of indigenous family counseling practices among Oromo community;
- To examine existing counseling techniques and methods in use in the indigenous counseling system;
- To identify how family in need of support communicate with indigenous counselors in the community settings

## METHODOLOGY

This study was entirely employing qualitative research, focusing on ethnographic research model since the major intent of the study was securing detailed

information from field. Ethnographic research is the most in-depth observational method that studies people in their naturally occurring environment. Thus the research design aims to understand the cultures, challenges, motivations, and settings that occur among the community. Ethnographic research design aims to understand the cultures, challenges, motivations, and settings that occur (Leonard, retrived 2019). So, instead of relying on interviews and discussions only, you experience the natural settings from first hand sources (Mayring, 2000). Additionally, interview and FGD was conducted with key and identified elder informants as to get reliable information.

Three areas (zones) of Oromiya employing indigenous knowledge and wisdom of Oromo were involved in the study where Gadaa practices get critical predisposition and custom. Thirteen elder counselors were selected purposefully with experts and professionals assistance working in the cultural sectors of the zones. Primary sources of information were collected from elder counselors and Gadaa leaders employing major qualitative data collection tools: Focus Group Discussion, interview and observation at natural settings. The data obtained through these techniques were first translated from Afan Oromo to English and reviewed repeatedly as to secure precision by the authors. The translated information was categorized based on their relationship and coded as to minimize repetition and facilitate for integrating concepts, views and thoughts. The thematically organized information was stated using narrative explanation through words and statements in the analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Counseling helps an individual keep in balance of the community life in the well-established and secured style and may help him/her lead better interaction in the society, family and neighborhood as well as increasing self-peace as of the respondent's opinion. It could be done, as of the writers, in the form of informal discussion with known individuals and elders in the family and kinship milieu. Accordingly, marriage and family counselors communicate with individuals, groups (as is evident among kuchu) and parents as to facilitate positive interaction, developing trust and common understanding among family and community members of Oromo community. (Arid and Arid, 2007) stated that 'Marriage counseling may be considered in this context as any counseling with one or more clients dealing with problems related to marriage,

including getting married (i.e., premarital counseling), staying married, or resolving problems related to marriage (e.g., sexual, money, children, in-laws, communication, etc.) or getting out of marriage (i.e., divorce counseling).'

The meaning of counseling is understood by the elder counselor as guiding, teaching and showing what is good and acceptable within the community settings as indicated by respondents. In this case, it seems directive, meditative and preventive than curing after bad situation operates. The determining factor that manipulates all their activity is the rules 'tumaa' imposed by general assembly every eight years. The definition given by (Ogubu as cited in Veronen, 2000) significantly support the finding of this study stating that, 'culture is an understanding that a people have of their universe – social, physical, or both – as well as their understanding of their behavior in that universe. The cultural model of a population serves its members as a guide in their interpretation of events and elements within their universe; it also serves as a guide to their expectations and actions in the universe or environment'. The culture in which the individual lives into and its expectation to life are heavily guided by the larger community which the writer termed as the universe. If the universe is healthy the elements are also healthy in their interactions and including all their actions.

As of the respondents, there are different stages of counseling discussed by elder counselors of all levels. These stages of counseling are - family level, neighbor or area level counseling, elder counselor 'jaarsa gorsaa'. The first counselor of a child is simple stick at initial stage of 0 – 2 years. Then after, the family proceeds to advising the child and counsel him/her by giving different options of life to choose between according to the way of life among the community. This stage is also characterized by teaching the child about community norm, traditions, rules and societal regulations, etc. Any problem that didn't get resolved at family level reaches 'qomoo' (elders of the small groups of family living in one locality having blood relations) named as kinfolk counseling. They try to handle every problem that arrive at them using different techniques of counseling like 'mammaaksa' (proverbs), 'weedduu' (different songs), 'baacoo' (oral narrations or folklore), events 'oduu durii', axiom 'hibboo', and 'mararoo' type of heartache song during wedding. 'Kuchuu' warning which is known as 'seedaa' is the counseling type practiced by the elder counselors of Borana assisting the 'kuchu' to prevent them from saying something bad that might blemish people when moving from place to place in the community environment, if one refuses to give them food or at any occasion faces challenge from a villagers. Hence, the third stage is of elder counselor

level who in most cases are the highest counseling service giving bodies working at vast areas of the community depending on the geographical location or ancestral relation.

Furthermore, the counselor provides marriage counseling to couples before, during and after marriage is concluded. In line with this study, Linder in his definition of marriage counseling, discussed on the counselor's role as follows. 'The counselor may work with an individual, a couple (conjunct), or with a group. In addition, the counselor might teach sex education, marital adjustment, childrearing, and other similar subjects. In defining "marriage counseling" interference to what the counselor actually does, the public will better know what to expect when seeking help (Steve, 1976).' The clients' family (bride or bridegroom) appeal to the counselors by going to their home to encourage their children in the way they lead new life with the new partner and family of the same if the client is female. Counseling at these two stages (pre and during) are related to giving directives, teaching, advising, showing, etc on how to lead new life in their interaction, communication, work, and family living. The new lady has to assimilate herself with all situations of the male since in her new connection she is living with the family until they are allowed to have their own home by the family members, especially parents. Therefore, the lady has to mix herself to the new family's rule and regulation, behavior, way of interaction, eating and drinking style, etc. She has also responsibility to serve them if the situation demands. 'Misiruma' is assumed as a grace period for the new couple know, learn and investigate each other's behavior, examine way of life of the family and spouse, interaction styles of the family, what they (family and partner/husband) like and dislikes, etc and decides with her husband on their future way of establishing the new residence.

This is mandatory for the female to pass through familial way of life style before constructing their new home as a couple. Consequently, strong counseling from the family members, specifically the mother of bridegroom (amaatii), kinship/neighbor counselors and elder counselor is decisive and mandatory that assists the bride develop positive attitude in her interaction with the family of the husband and how to lead successful life in her stay with the family of the male whether it takes a month or more in group life. A week time here is a must which is named as 'shanan' (fifth day) when the bride (misirroo) has got new name like 'soorettii' wife of first son, specifically from his mother's side if the father has two or more wives; 'hortuu' wife of the second son in the family, and so on.

Discussants indicated that the fifth day is signified by accompaniment of best-men 'miinjee-singular' (miinjota) plural, to stay with the spouses assisting, advising, introducing and serving the bride in her new environment. Elders assigned by the family of the bride bless the girl before they hand her to the first best man 'primary best-man' to take care of her, counsel and assist her in all affairs of new life making oath in front of the wedding participants to treat all matters regarding the bride as his own personal sister. This finding is highly supported by the work of Gemechu and Assefa (3) stating that 'after the completion of the blessing, elders from the bride's side demand miinjee (first best-man) to be named and becomes forward when the proxy for the groom's father (represented) calls his name. He receives an oath to counsel and protect all her ways, to help her whenever she is in problem and asks him for help'.

The post-marriage counseling session in couple's life extends from any form of disagreement between couples or any disorder happening between couples because of third party interference (family members) or suspicion of any of the same. This sometimes arise due to mistrust, poor dealings between the couple, misunderstanding, lack of patience, inability to accept one another, fear of irregularities, fear of situations/burden of new life, lack of experience and others which is inevitable among many new couples life. Before the situation reaches to elder counselors; family counseling, the 'birtaa'oo' (second best-man with the prime) take responsibility of resolving any conflict arose between them. If the situation goes beyond their control, they invite family to interfere the situation from both sides. If unsettled, it reaches elder counselors for further intervention.

Correspondently, engagement problem is major area that needs further counseling from elder counselors. This may happen as a dispute between two males because of the engagement made by one and contested by the other, either through communicating the engaged lady or through her girlfriends or relatives or may take her off by force which is termed as 'butii' abduction. This type of dispute needs acute counseling if not resolved by reconciliation that is rare in occurrence nowadays because of formal legislation enacted by government to curb violence against female. Gemech & Assefa (3) clarify the issue as follows in supporting this finding. 'Butii is that where the boy with his friends abducts the girl from where he hides himself. The boy, however, waits for the girl in this hiding until she comes to his share. If it happens that the girl is not alone; a combat is almost always likely to occur between the boy's friends on the one hand and the woman or men with the girl on the other. ... And on the same night where



the abduction carried out, the boy deflowers the girl for a girl who has lost her virginity will not go back to her family. On the tomorrow of the day of abduction, the boy's family sends elders to the girl's family to settle the matter.'

The counselors are said to be 'hayyu' the knowledgeable in the community in serving the problem person, growing children, and the family in conflict and groups in trouble. Children are the most relevant portions of the community to get counseling services from the date of the parent's perception about correcting the child. Parents in Oromo community give great emphasis to the developmental period of their children. A study result done by (Bolton-Brownlee, 1987), supports similar view stating that 'Africans place great value on the family, especially their children, who are seen as a gift from God, and on social relationships, with a great emphasis on the community and their place in it'. In this context social conflict resolution becomes important, so that peace and equilibrium may be restored to the community, while personal conduct becomes secondary in any form of counseling. Additionally, teaching and guiding of children in their developmental growth is an inflict one benefits among the community to maintain peaceful development.

Individuals may go to counselors home to get counseling services with their personal or familial problems. The kinfolk/clan elders also bring cases that are beyond their counterpart and bring the case to us or telling the individual or group to contact us. Mostly, family cases get resolved at this level if the couples need further investigation. In line with this finding, (Slupesky, 2006) discussed that during a marriage therapy session, a young couple was telling me about the issues that had been causing them to be in intense conflict. It was a typical session for couples to solve particular problem with an extended family member.

As of Kuyyu Oromo counselors, the Aba Kuna, the cases that come to them is what didn't get resolved by kinfolk counselors like family dispute, organized theft and aggression against individuals or groups, case of murder, and other issues that need further counseling. The family dispute in this area is critical that needs strong counseling support as of that of Guji Oromo since the elder counselors /Aba Kuna/ are responsible to the level of permitting divorce if they have tried all the options exhaustively. If divorce is applied, the woman has the right to have dividend of all the property she possessed within the family life. Both family members get pre and post counseling to the extent that they have to lead acceptable life style in the community if they agree to live together or get divorced. The case of disguised acts like theft and

murder also need further investigation headed by Aba Kuna with intensive counseling, advice, and persuasion to uncover the criminal. In line with this study, marriage counseling means the providing of guidance, testing, discussions, therapy, instructions, or the giving of advice, the principal purpose of which is to avoid, eliminate, relieve, manage or resolve marital conflict or discord or to create, improve, onto prepare couples for marriage (Nicholas, 1973). Since all persuasion and counseling were done to make the individual expose himself, the effort becomes restricted after the criminal is identified. Because, every individual in the society has clear vision on what is going to be done on or knows the effect of such an act in the traditional rules of the fathers. The effort that comes next is on how to minimize the punishment, persuade and counsel the victims not to exaggerate situations and counseling the individual client /criminal/ to put down unacceptable behaviors and become better resident in the community contiguous.

**Females as Counselors:** The first counselor of her daughter is the mother like the father for the boy. She is responsible to teach, guide, counsel her child starting from breast feeding. In Oromo saying 'haadha ilaalanii hintala fuudhu' means looking at the performance of her mother one can marry the daughter. Therefore, the mother takes great responsibility in advising and counseling her child on how to behave in home and outside, alone and in front of guest, where to keep materials, how to keep the home and the garden clean, how to interact with people, and so forth.

All the mothers in Oromo community are responsible in counseling their children, specifically the daughter in training, teaching, counseling and directing on the well accepted life of the community. Training of female children and adolescents centers on house work chore, loyalty, respect to people, love and courtesy, neatness, empathy and care for family. If she is out of the mother's control, the father takes responsibility in counseling her. No case of a girl go beyond parents counseling unless there will be mental problem that needs assistance of kinship and mental clinics.

**The Family as Center of Counseling:** The counselors always give foremost attention to the family life since they consider that family is the base for community. Moreover, they are devoted to their works even if they are not paid for the service they render or not got hired getting any remuneration from anybody either from government or individuals. They give free service for their community expecting nothing from them. But, as of my observation done at all traditional counselors home

and the leaders of community Aba Gadaa's home, they are among the well-to-do in the community life. The why case needs further assessment for the door is open for researchers. What matters here is the counselor's devotion in maintaining peace by giving significant deliberation to safeguard the wellbeing of their community. The main focus is settling the distress that might surpass the control of family and might create other disturbance to the individual and the community. The elder counselors try to control the cases of impending conflicts before they emerge in the community life and make efforts in manipulating safe prerequisite to manage the tribulation.

With regard to the session's length of discussion, one case may take one to two hours and may be extended to three to four days without considering case of the opponent. Sometimes, one takes a day to resolve conflicts depending on the seriousness of the situation. One of the elders underlined that *if for example, the case of juvenile delinquency (disobedience) appears in the family members and there exist tribulation, we take the situation as solemn case and treat it as soon as possible even if it takes twenty four hours.*

The time bestowed on family counseling is the same for all localities as of the case vary from individual family hold to the other in all areas. Counseling for family members may take longer period in a day, but might not exceed the given day. Because, as all the respondents mentioned, issue of the family has to get solution within a given day. If it goes beyond that there is a belief in the community saying that passing a night at different place entails difference in heart or relation 'nama halkan addadda bule lapheetu gargar bula' which specifically refers to spouses. This and other related factors that the community members hold as a belief enforce the elder counselor or kinfolk counselor at local level, to settle family disputes and difficulties with in a given day investing all their efforts the whole day as much as possible. This finding reveals that the time taken for counseling varies depending on the issue under consideration even if what is mentioned is still there.

What so ever the case may be, the evident and major techniques of marriage and family counseling in the community belief are the following.

- Mammaaksa (proverb) – is one best technique employed by all members of the community to guide, show direction, advise, counsel, warn, correct, or teach an individual in the course of life. There are proverbs of counseling that has great value in the individuals thought to examine his/her way of life. It serves as a mirror in which he evaluates himself, inspect his did or act, examine his way, take scrutiny of his way of life as compared to the rules and regulations

of the community, and may come to settle himself in the realm of the stated societal decree.

- In songs 'sirba' – counseling in the form of song or any type used in Afan Oromo are said to be of double meaning that is assumed as idiomatic in nature. It is composed of phrases that have binary meaning on the second phrase having rhyme. There is easily understood meaning and hidden meaning in the phrases, specifically in the continuing part. Since a growing child in the culture is acquainted with the existing songs, he can understand the message or ask the one who uses the stated song to clarify it. Song said as 'sirbaa' is mostly used around the central parts/areas of the country as statement of counseling, teaching and directing. This form of song is of divergent type like song for oxen during plowing or herding cows, wedding, festivity, holydays, cultural rituals, etc.

- Mararoo as a form of song is used to give final advice for the marrying girl on her wedding ceremony. When all things is complete and verify that the lady (bride) is going to leave now, her girlfriends song 'mararoo' as a last statement of saying bye to their friend so as to help the lady be strengthened in the future life which could be strange and challenging for her. 'Mararoo' keeps one to get self-control over the situation he/she faces and understood by all since the individual is member of the community who abide (him/her) themselves to the rules of the community. It has influencing power that dictates decision of the individual in a way that it has great importance in late life whether one chooses the positive or negative direction in balancing the new and old life.

- A hymn 'weedduu' is song 'sirbaa' of advice, readiness, direction and arousal of visualized challenges, opportunities and unexpected conditions. A hymn is heart touching song of advice practiced by limited individuals which need ability comprehending the statements in the way that it is sweet for the listener and has influencing message. It is interesting when listening and used as entertainment in life. But, the counselors use it as the best teaching technique /counseling method/ in their relations with clients transfer relevant message making them relaxing and content for bridegroom. It has teaching, expectation (positive or negative), heart winning, evolving and introduce to the new condition for a lady in a confusion aspiring to mingle with new family, situation

and community. The researcher believes that it could be potential area to be studied as folklore of Oromo.

To counsel her daughter the mother says for example-

‘wanni ani si gorsu  
Eeboo balbalaati;  
Eelee galgalaati;  
Ibiddi hin dhaaminii – Alaa sin waamini’

Which states that the married daughter has to stockpile fire under ash bearing in mind that not to go to the neighboring house to find fire. If the new married woman moves from home-to-home in request of getting fire, it is shame to her and her parents in the community that the mother strongly counsel her daughter before marriage is concluded.

Other songs of counseling by age mate during marriage ceremony when the bridegroom takes the bride from her family are:

‘Baala huuraa, baala huuraa, (2)  
Alagaan gulloo gannaatii;  
Gaaf ifee, gaaf nyaara guuraa,  
Itti beekii, itti deemi’ (2)’

This saying is intended to state about the new area, where she is going to mix up herself with. In this new area she has to make herself ready acquaint to the bride’s family life in all affairs. She has to obey the mother of bridegroom ‘amaatii’ and walk alongside the interest of her /the mother/ until she manages the situation. Both forms of the counseling (by mother or girlfriends) given ahead of marriage focus on how to associate herself with strangers in the family formation.

Counseling methods employed among Oromo community, in addition to the techniques aforementioned, are using different songs of the culture mostly pertinent among females during marriage conclusion. The mother and the age mates of the daughter have plentiful songs of counseling, appreciation and consideration. The marriage dance, songs of counseling and appreciation begins at least a month before the date of marriage. In accordance with this study, Gemechu and Assefa stated that betrothed marriage preparations begin a couple of weeks before the date of wedding. Fifteen or twenty days before marriage, the young girl friends of the bride-to-be are invited to come to her house after dark to practice singing and dancing. This is called

jala bultii (Gemechu & Assefa, 2006). The songs are heart touching, spotless and persuasive in guiding, directing, showing and telling the reality of new situation that she is going to mingle herself.

In Oromo traditional counseling culture, the engaged lady is not allowed to contact family of husband since the culture never permit such type of relationship mainly for the purpose of avoiding fear of premarital sex. The one who affianced the lady has also no right to contact the engaged lady alone. Both family members advice and counsel their own children; why this thing is not allowed during their adolescence life. Parents and kinfolk counselors also train children not to commit adultery before marriage. It is forbidden act, specifically for the lady missing her virginity /hymen/ before marriage and this point is the issue parents bear in mind to let their teen not to come in contact with her fiancée alone except accompanied by her girlfriend or her siblings. Therefore, counseling here serves the people to keep them from doing what is prohibited in the community. It is hence said to be pre-counseling and as well preventive counseling type in nature.

Continuing his narration, the respondent states that they additionally counsel the youth on how to save money and keep materials in the form of saving for future use rather than spending it extravagantly for personal consumption during teenage period of life. They start counseling from childhood to adolescence referring to the time when they are unable to find power of collecting treasure or accumulate money or items needed. They train them that there might time come when they become weak, specifically after marriage since they are going to make dependents before having material deposit for later use. Therefore, elders use the song or waltz/foxtrot 'geerarsa' sometimes. It could be the following.

“Arfaasaa qotan malee birraa maal makaratuu;  
Qeerrummaan horan malee niitii fuunaan maal nyaatuu...”

Which literally mean that ‘unless you saw during spring (the first start of rain), there will be nothing to harvest; if not accrue wealth during adolescence, there could be nothing to feed the spouse after marriage’. It is pre-counseling stage of initiating and directing for adolescents, that warns the youth to work hard before institute marriage’ that is to be ready the individual being self-sufficient and feed the family without fear and tension after marriage. To show the usefulness of work and effort for self-benefit:

“Surree jilabarraan dhumte, abbatu waraannataa  
Deega ijjoollummaan dhufte, abbaatu tattaafataa;  
Deega koo yaa farrisaa, tur amman sifannisaa  
Muka baala hin qabnetti, ilma abbaan abaaretti ...”

When translated – while a trouser is torn on knee, the individual him/herself can sew, where poverty may face an adolescent, he could exert utmost effort as to survive; the harsh poverty I faced, let me hung you on a tree shaded its leaf, on cursed baby child by parents ... Here, we can deduce that every effort a person made during adolescence is an outlet in the future brighter or gloomy life. Curse and indolence are almost analogous terms related or leading to poverty, worsening, ineptness, ineffectiveness, negligence, deprived, etc. So, adolescents (male and female) listen carefully and practice every pieces of the advice given from parents, kin and elders for future success.

**Women Empowerment and Counseling:** In the traditional counseling system, the voice of female is not heard as such to the outside discussion and confrontation. But, they are so much gifted in counseling the babes, adolescent girls reaching to the age of marriage, the new companion of their son, and other females who are relative to them. As the observation done around Arsi zone of Oromia Regional State, the female has strong power to stop any conflict between individuals or groups or clan by throwing a traditionally respected stick of reconciliation named as ‘siiqqee’. SMCO (Save Mothers and Children of Oromo) an NGO operating in Arsi zone of Oromia explained, ‘siiqqee is a curved stick symbolizing a socially sanctioned set of rights exercised by women in the Oromo society. ... It is used as a weapon to fight any force that threatens the basic rights of a married woman to her life (SMCO, 2010).’ Every born of the community has great respect to stop dispute whenever the entitled lady lie down the ‘sike’ in front of you that spells out never pass it when laid before anybody even if chasing ones opponent for vengeance. The issue needs further study since the door is open for assessors.

In other cases, female in the culture have a gathering of prayer where they discuss on every matters of family life and gets to the ceremony of prayer known as ‘ateetee’. The prayer and thanks giving ceremony in the community has its own time, when and where of its type that also need further study open for researchers. On these occasions and other ritual ceremonies, the female have the right to discuss on issues related to personal and social interaction they prefer essential even if, in most cases, could not be formal as that of the general assembly of the Gada gather. Because of this, in varied places where the community resides, males are the major ones entitled to be

elder counselors in all spheres of life regarding crucial matters while mothers (females) are entitled to counsel the same, settle down any conflict from occurrence, and advise her husband in all matters of crossing points. No ritual among the community is done without the participation of female members and the widowed have also the right to participate on general assembly from the beginning. At this juncture it seems better to raise the females' participation on activities that doesn't challenge them according to the belief of Oromo community like labor demanding occupations.

According to the labor division of the Oromo culture, the female counterparts are significant among the community in all spheres of life and highly respected constituent of the community expected to abide to the rule of the community. Due to the evading political system and pseudo Ethiopians controlled power in the country, enormous ladies get in to the politics without consulting the community custom and many husbands were snatched their wives by political cadres which weakened the culture of community. Because of this and other prevailing factors, many female members of the community prefer to put their matters in front of courts than family counselors and elder counselor's consultation. In fact, whatever the matter is, the better way to make agreement between families is through elder council where most judges assign nowadays the family council as the desirable ground for decision making in any dispute raised among family members before decision of courts. But the culture is even now under custody of meager functioning because of high interference from government political nominees and cadres.

Types of counseling relevant in marriage and family therapy endorsed by the researcher are the following:

1. Gorsa Maatii – This is evident at home where parents: tell, teach advice and guide their children practicing certain lifestyles within the community perspectives. The father as head of the house takes the responsibility of directing his own children to: perform definite jobs relevant to the age, respect rule of parents and elders in the home, follow rules & regulations of the society perform tasks requested by the parents, keep taboo (safuu) and rule of relationship (duudhaa) of the community, be brave in defending self from any attack (animals or human robbers, or alien intrusion), etc.

Besides, the community gives great attention to their children since they believe that children are gift of God 'kennaa Waaqaa' and they are responsible to rear them in the way that it is acceptable to the creature and the society. Because of this, every parent



needs his child to resemble him as much as possible in respecting and abiding to the rules of the community in all sphere of life. Hence, parents have to be role models for their children and neighboring ones.

The counseling is uninterrupted till the child reaches age of marriage. Therefore, children persistently learn 'safuu' deference in the community, 'seexaa - seta' (desire of accomplishment /success/ or having desired goal) in their relationship within the community settings. Safuu (word of respect) and 'seexaa' (craving of success) are known among Oromo community as an area which needs further study since it has broad view on how to manage and exercise it in societal context.

2. Gorsa Kuchuu – At this level youths of the same group gather together and search for elder counselors for counseling purpose since the 'kuchuu' are at the age of holding responsibility in the community as of Borana, Guji Oromo and adjacent Oromo culture. In other areas of Oromia like 'Liban' elder counselors and Gada leaders take the responsibility to bring together these adolescent age children of 'Raabaa' age 16–24, for counseling purpose.

The major purposes are on: how to overtake responsibility from parents, establish home since they get in to marriage, how to use money, how to lead life independently, how to abide to the rules and regulations of fathers, and generally how to carry all responsibilities from forefathers since they are descendants taking the responsibility of leading, feeding, guiding, and governing the community.

This is grace period when they learn and put into effect all including personal and social responsibilities at individual and group level. It is ample time to exercise leadership role as parents in personal home, taking leadership initiatives and others. They also strictly learn the rules and regulations passed by the community aided by elders to execute them as life practice.

3. Marriage counseling (Gorsa gaa'ila) – Marriage counseling is the prominent period where couples case become dominant than family therapy. After passing developmental periods counseling, or stages of counseling during development from early life to adolescent period, one gets into ideation of marriage (getting in to responsibility). This type of counseling mostly begins after getting in to engagement or planning to marry. It could be guided by

family, peer groups, elders and relatives. Elder counselor's activity is more accepted, structured and standardized.

Marriage counseling starts during the age of adolescence aided by the mother for the female and father for the male children as continuation of guiding and teaching the rules of law during childhood. Marriage counseling employed before adolescents get into any form of opposite sex relationship or exercised in culture (e.g., cultural dancing 'sirba'). As evident in the country, female should have hymn or never make sexual practice before marriage. In this case, there could be lip lover 'a kiss', nowadays named boyfriend. It is secret to parents or relatives except for adolescents of similar age. Intensive and proper counseling takes place at three levels of counseling: The parents, the kinfolk and elder counselors continue counseling from engagement level up to marriage is concluded. The other version of marriage counseling (remediation) appears at all three stages if any form of disputes occur between couples in pair life or if disagreement happens between couples and/or family.

4. Gorsa hiriyaa – Peer counseling is common among Oromo community in all the corners, right from peer selection stage. Children exercise what they have observed from family during meal, when collecting cattle, during group work at 'daboo' or 'jigii', while sitting to heat fire (Getachew and Tsehay, 2019). Adolescents counseling practice come to be evident whilst playing together, during herding, exercise parenting act (role play father–mother), at pilgrim period during the years of 'kuchuu' with similar age groups in the study areas. Peer counseling is sometimes aided by the strong follow-up of kinfolk and elder counselor's supervision. The persuasive ones in the group ask for assistance and need guide of elder counselors on their walk. This counseling may take a year for couples or years.

Distinct to this finding, (Lisa, 2012) stated that Pre-marriage counseling doesn't need to be a long process and only with some clarifications and goal-setting. Conversely, Lisa noted that 'be sure to take the time to invest in your marriage as you might in the event itself. The return on your marriage investment has the potential to be lifelong'.

## CONCLUSIONS

Marriage and family counseling is an institution among Oromo community which was so maintained and sustained through oral communication and practices for more than millions of years. It starts right after 'gube buusii' shaving of born hair. Most of the time, the father takes lions' share duty of the male guiding, teaching, advising and supporting while the mother follow her daughter. The father is responsible giving overall follow-up, look and attention towards proper development children's behavior, socialization and psychological makeup. 'Kuchu' counseling, 'dardara' guidance and counseling, engagement counseling, and knowledge of 'eebbaa' and 'abaarsaa' are among the major areas of concern at all levels.

Consequently, varied marriage and family counseling are utilized to make the community life in equilibrium. It emphasizes on the total holistic development of a child in guiding and planning about its communication, interaction, work, relationship, attitude, personality, cultural wisdom and reality seeking in the community with the help of parents, kinfolk and elder counselors until establishing personal home which is termed as marriage and family formation.

Marriage and Family Therapy concluded that principles of marriage and family counseling, procedures and ages of application are critically identified and in practice. It incorporates indigenous knowledge and skills of counseling to educate the growing and adolescents on future relationship. Marriage and Family Therapy is a process and lifelong support drawn-out from home, engagement, marriage and termination. The main issues getting attention in this study are: Pre-marriage counseling (preventive, guide ...), family disorders, marriage dispute, forceful marriage (butii), marriage intrusion by jiffy lover, family intrusion (from either side). Songs 'sirba'– has double meaning and idiomatic in nature. It is composed of phrases which begin as early as 'jalbultii' (at least a month before marriage time). Mammaaksa 'proverb' – which is common for all types of community interactions, play significant role in Marriage and Family Counseling as well. 'Mararoo' is form of song used to grant final advice for the girl on her wedding ceremony. It is last statement of saying bye to their friend so as to lend a hand for the lady fusion to new family. It is exclusively used as a heart touching advice that makes an individual to think and rethink of 'what has been said' in ones connection of mingled life. A hymn 'weedduu' is almost similar to that of song; but

limited to individual's ability comprehend the statements. It attracts attention of people as to serve as teaching and counseling with sweet melody.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cultural assets need to be included in the education curriculum of the country focusing on cultural values, norms, knowledge and understanding. Critical subjects like language, civics and ethical education, social sciences, geography of Oromia and history of Oromo community needs to give great attention and focus to indigenous counseling proliferating in the public.

Awareness raising, sensitization and advocacy as to communicate indigenous knowledge is underscored as wisdom of Oromo community in the development of one's identity, personality and psychological makeup that has to be taught to children from early age of schooling to tertiary level as major asset of Oromo community.

Indigenous Marriage and Family Therapy has to be studied intensively as to develop multicultural counseling: Principles, techniques and methodologies relevant to our community like Oromo folklore, Gadaa administration, Oromo calendar and astronomy, 'ateetee' and other Oromo wisdoms through art, sports, community gatherings, research, conferences and workshops.

## IMPLICATION FOR FAMILY THERAPY

Indigenous counseling approach among Oromo community places vigor input in development of multicultural counseling, the fourth force in counseling psychology, where views, concepts, and procedures of family therapy can function effectively in multi-ethnic world. Strong communication, follow-up and intimacy of family supported child rearing leads to develop stable lifestyle.

## DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since the study employed qualitative method, it is indispensable if mixed research approach is used to supplement the findings. Consequently, Oromo wisdom in maintaining peace, conflict resolution and the 'safuu' (respect to God – the creator and creature) needs further investigation to supplement counseling.

## CONSENT AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research procedures were strictly followed by securing permission from institution and consent obtaining from respondents. Ethical considerations get due attention since the study was conducted on human beings and community wisdom from research and ethical review board of Education and Behavioral Science College.

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