

## Family Violence in Addis Ababa: Challenges of Reconciling Culture and Human Rights in Ethiopia

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### Abstract

Family violence includes physical, psychological and sexual violations such as pinching, beating, hitting, scolding, yelling and coerced sex. Wife beating and child corporal punishment are major family/domestic violence in Ethiopia. This study focused on wife beating (battering). It has attempted to find out the main causes for the spouses' violence, what husbands and wives do when their respective spouses are at fault. Also, attempts are made to relate the violations to the dominant culture and to specific human rights articles. It is a descriptive study that used a questionnaire. The data were collected on a sample of 56 family heads (33F, 23M) in Lideta and Shiro Meda areas of Addis Ababa. The responses to the open ended questions were content analyzed by the author and research assistant. Thematic categories were developed based on the literature reviewed and the responses of the respondents.

It is found that poor living conditions, poor management of family income, jealousy/mistrust, husbands coming home drunk and poor communication (lack of understanding) are the major causes of family conflicts mentioned. The reasons listed for beating wives include: Suspicion of adultery, husbands' drunkenness, jealousy (*kinat*), husbands desire to show dominance, misunderstandings and lack of discussion, and claim of culturally accepted way of disciplining. Calling on elders/relatives, discussing the problem, leaving home, and tolerating the problem are the main actions taken by the wives when their husbands are at fault.

Teaching the public and couples about the habit of discussion and tolerance, providing marriage and family life education to the youth, improvement of the economic conditions of families, teaching of human rights education to the public, and taking of serious legal measures on those

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who are violent are steps/actions suggested by a large number of the participants.

## **1. Introduction**

Family violence is a serious social problem prevalent throughout Ethiopia. Violence between parents, as well as parental violence against children affect the well being of the family members and violate their rights. Wife beating and physical punishment of children seem to be part of the dominant culture and practiced commonly. Family violence cuts across ethnic and religious groups, social classes and residential areas. It is a major social problem that requires serious studies, deliberations, designing of strategies to eliminate (prevent) or at least to reduce the prevalence.

The practices are against the Ethiopian constitution and various international and regional conventions adopted by Ethiopia. These instruments proclaim that everyone (particularly women and children) is to be protected from bodily harm, and the family is to be protected by the State. Also, traditional practices which cause bodily and mental harm to women and children are prohibited. Despite the proclamations and rhetoric of respecting human rights, family (domestic) violence continues at a large rate. The cultural foundations are not exposed and the public at large does not seem to be aware of the problem and its individual rights.

This study has attempted to find out the main causes for the spouses' violence, what husbands and wives do when their respective spouses are at fault. Also, attempts are made to relate the violations to the dominant culture and specific human rights articles. Furthermore, some strategies and measures to take to prevent or to at least greatly reduce the violations are suggested.

## **Research Questions**

The following were the main research questions raised in this study:

1. What are the main causes (contributing factors) for family conflicts in selected communities in Addis Ababa?
2. What are the main causes (reasons) for family violence in the studied communities?

3. What actions do spouses in the studied communities take when partners are at fault?
4. What could be done to reduce or eliminate the incidence of family violence?

### **Objectives and Significance of the Study**

The main objectives of the study were the following:

1. To find out the main contributing factors to family conflict in selected communities in Addis Ababa;
2. To identify and discuss the factors that precipitate family violence (wife beating) in these communities in Addis Ababa;
3. To find out what actions spouses take when partners are at fault;
4. To suggest strategies and measures to take to prevent and reduce family violence.

Family violence is not a well-studied and documented issue in Ethiopia. Only a few exploratory studies are available (e.g. ANPPCAN, 1999; EWLA, 2000; Bilen, 2002; Habtamu, 1998a; Panos, 2002; Original, Emebet & Mellese, 2004; Tegbar, Anwar & Yigzaw, 2004; WHO, 2005). The author is not aware of rigorous studies conducted in Addis Ababa, focusing on the causes of family violence, what the perpetrators usually do, and strategies to use to eliminate or at least reduce the magnitude of the violence. In addition to dealing with these issues, this study attempts to relate the problem with the relevant international and national laws on human/women's rights. Furthermore, it lays the ground for more comprehensive and multiethnic studies using different approaches to collect data, analyses and interpretation. The limitations of the study in terms of the small sample size, sample selection and geographical area have to be kept in mind in making generalizations about Ethiopia or Addis Ababa.

### **Method**

**The Participants/Sample:-** Fifty-six adults (33 females and 23 males) participated in the study. Thirty of them were from Lideta while 26 were from Shiro Meda (Entoto) area in Addis Ababa. Their ages varied from 24

to 68 years and their mean age is 42.52 years. All were married and had at least a child. The average family size was 5.86 persons. Most of the participants were Orthodox Christians. A few were Moslems and Protestants. 20, 43 and 37% of the participants had primary, secondary and above 12th grade education. Convenience sampling method was used to select the areas and the participants of the study. The researcher and an assistant went door to door and got the heads of the household present at the time complete the questionnaire.

**The Instrument:-** A questionnaire, mainly with open-ended items was prepared by the author in February/March 2002. It consisted of items/questions on demographic issues, causes for conflicts, reasons for family violence (wife beating), steps to take to eliminate or reduce family violence, and other related issues. It was prepared and administered in Amharic. The participants were fluent in the Amharic language.

**Procedure:-** The questionnaire was completed by the participants themselves, except six participants for whom a research assistant filled out the questionnaire. Household heads available at home during data collection dates in mid-August, 2002 completed the questionnaire. Most participants completed and returned them the same day. Only a few returned them the second day while four participants did not return them at all. The questionnaire was completed in the respective residence or compound of the participants who were willing to complete it. The responses to the open-ended questions are content analyzed by the author and an assistant. First thematic categories were developed by the author, based on the literature reviewed and the responses to the questions. The details are presented in the Findings section.

## 2. Literature Review

Most researchers agree that a family is two or more persons committed to each other and who share intimacy, resources, responsibilities for decisions, and values (e.g., Olson & Defrain, 2000; Duvall & Miller, 1985; Clayton, 1979). Usually a family (*beteseb*) consists of a married couple sharing the same residence with their children and perform sexual, reproductive and various socio-economic functions. Families produce children, raise them to adulthood, provide affection and love, and protect the weak and ill

members. In Ethiopia both nuclear family (consisting of father, mother and their offspring's) and extended family (the spouses, children, relatives and grandparents) arrangements exist. Perhaps extended families are more common than nuclear families in both urban and rural settings of the country.

Halford and Markman (1997) report that almost all people become involved in intimate couple relationships at some point in their lives, regardless of country and culture. Over 90% of the Western population gets married sometimes in their life. But a little over 50% of the marriages in the USA end up in divorce due to various marital conflicts and dissatisfaction. Over 40% of Australian and some European countries (e.g. UK) also end up in divorce. These data are supported by other sources such as Olson and Defrian (2000). The same researchers state that the prominent couples' problems are: poor communications and misunderstanding, power struggle between the couples, unrealistic expectations about marriage, sexual problems, poor money management, extramarital affairs, children, role and values conflicts, and lack of loving feelings.

A national study that involved most populous nine ethnic groups in Ethiopia, in which 2,165 household heads participated reported that misuse of family income, poverty (inability to support the family), committing adultery, being sterile, not getting along (poor communication), jealousy, sexual incompatibility, interference of in-laws and relatives, rumors and gossips are the major causes of conflicts in families in Ethiopia (Habtamu, 1998). Lack of love between the partners, wife beating and husbands' drunkenness are also other factors identified as contributing factors for family conflicts. It is to be noted that some of the causal factors are similar across cultures and others are peculiar to the socio-economic and cultural situation of Ethiopia.

A large number of studies indicate that a couple tends to have a fight a month. Olson and Defrain (2000) reviewed several studies and indicated that a study in the USA shows that 70% of the newlyweds had a fight a month. Families can have arguments, some tension, misunderstandings, emotionally toned words, and in general conflicts. But physical, sexual and psychological violence is usually a criminal behavior and violates human rights. Conflicts often tend to lead to various kinds of abuses and violence. Violence is often defined as any act carried out with the intention of hurting another person. Aronson, Wilson and Akert (1994:490) define it as "an

intentional action aimed at doing harm or causing physical or psychological pain to another person." Domestic violence (family violence) is a rampant phenomenon through out the world, particularly in developing countries such as Ethiopia. Usually women and children are the main victims (Oyekanni, 2000; Hanmer & Itzin, 2000; Habtamu Wondimu,1998a; WHO, 2005). The Population Information Center of the Johns Hopkins University (1999: 1) states that:

Around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her life time. Most often the abuser is a member of her own family. Increasingly, gender based violence is recognized as a major public health concern and a violation of human rights.

Family violence may take physical, psychological and sexual forms of abuses and violations. The UN (1993:Article 1) defines violence against women as "any act of gender -based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". It encompasses physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, the community, and the work place. Violence between spouses and against children is often labeled as domestic or family violence (e.g., Foshee, Bauman and Linder 1990; Glanz & Spiegel, 1996; Geller & Straus, 1979; ANPPCAN, 1999). This author prefers the latter term. Our concern is limited to violence in family settings, mainly wife beating (in a setting of intimate relationship). It is to be noted that other types of violence against women such as rape, abduction, early marriage, sexual harassment, and female genital mutilation (FGM) are widely prevalent in Ethiopia (FSS, 2002; Seblewongel, 2002; EWLA, 2000/01).

Types of violence, also called, marital violence, intimate partner abuse, gender-based violence, wife beating or battering include infliction of bodily injury, sexual harassment, destruction of property, and verbal abuses. Slapping, beating on the body, pushing, threatening, burning, dragging, caning, beating by horsewhip, punching, stabbing, scolding, pinching, kicking, insulting, and throwing objects at the persons are some of the types of family violence reported in the literature (e.g. Oyekanni, 2000; Hubbard

& Wise, 1998; Levinson, 1989; Hanmer & Itzin, 2000; Bilen Gizaw, 2002; Population Information Center, 1999; WHO, 2005). The perpetrators use fists, hands, feet, belts, sticks, electrical flexes, and various objects for beating their wives. The above and other studies show that wife battering is highly related to child abuse, poverty and unemployment (e.g. Hubbard & Wise, 1998). Olson and Defrain (2000) reported that "seventy percent of the men who batter their partners also batter their children" (p.518). It is to be noted that quite a bit of interpersonal violence exists in Ethiopian schools (Habtamu Wondimu, 1998b).

In addition to the pains and bruises, battered women experience psychological distress, fear, insomnia, low self esteem, depression, nightmares, guilt, shame, pessimism and feelings of inferiority. Oyekanni (2000) reports that the main causal factors for wife beating in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya are: behavioral differences between the spouses, misunderstandings (lack of clear communication), third party interference, economic hardship, infidelity, and provocation (insult). Types of violence in these countries are similar to what is reported above.

Most of the above studies report that families prone to family violence (including child abuse) tend to be economically distressed (low income, unemployed), lack communication and parenting skills, abuse alcohol, are socially isolated (few friends), younger in age (below 30 years), had violence in the family of origin, and large in family size. A major contributing factor to family violence is the culture of the society.

Culture is defined as "a more or less integrated system of learned skills, norms, values and beliefs that constitute a peoples' way of life" (Federico, 1975:695). To Chiwome and Gambahaya (1998: 26), culture is a learned, socially transmitted heritage of artifacts, knowledge, beliefs, values and normative expectations that provide members of a particular society with tools of coping. For the purposes of this paper, culture is a relatively stable way of life that has been learned, is shared by most members of the society, and plays a significant role in the determination of human behavior. Rules and norms that govern interpersonal relations, division of labor (male-female, child -adult, husband-wife), dwellings' style, family relationships, decision making and sharing of responsibilities in families, and parenting styles are the dictates of the specific culture (Rokeach, 1973; Triandis, 1994; Shaffer, 1988; Schwartz, 1992). Cultural values (general beliefs about desirable actions and goals), beliefs and what are often called "harmful

traditional practices" are major elements of culture and play significant role in family violence. Family violence is a learned and socially accepted/valued behavior that is mostly accepted or at least easily tolerated by the women themselves in Ethiopia (Habtamu, 1998a; Tigist, 2000; Habtamu, Hirut, Yusuf & Konjit, 2004; Tegbar, Anwar & Yigzaw, 2004).

There are several theories concerning family violence. Most theories use socio-cultural, ecological, social-psychological and intra-individual explanations (Levinson, 1989; Geller and Straus, 1979; Mckndrick & Hoffmann, 1990; Population Information Center, 1999; WHO, 2005). Socio-cultural theories use social system, culture and values, issues of dominance and decision making concerning resources as contributing factors. The ecological framework tries to understand family violence in terms of the interaction of individual personality, the family, community and general socio-cultural factors. Intra-individual theories focus on individual's characteristics, psychopathology, and alcohol use. Social-psychological theories use family socialization (learning), contextual factors, and frustration leading to aggression as explanations. Though there are differences in emphasis most theories seem to accept the importance of culture and social learning in the explication of (as major determinants of) violence in the family. This is the theoretical framework adopted for this study. Interpersonal violence is learned at home and the community at large and transmitted from one generation to the next. It is a major technique of resolving conflicts. Children observe parents, and their prestigious models use violence in their daily interactions and with their spouses. Children observe the circumstances, the act, the language, the emotions, and consequences. Usually the aggressors are those who have resources and tend to control others' behavior. Hence, children learn that violence is an accepted way of disciplining and controlling others' behaviors. Violence becomes (is expected to be) part of family life and way of resolving misunderstandings.

Also, structural inequalities based on economic or cultural factors would promote violence (Glanz & Spiegel, 1996). Women's dependence on men for material support makes them vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual assaults. In addition to being the norm, it creates a sense of helplessness on the part of the wives to break out of violent relationships.

Assaultive behaviors within families are highly underreported crimes throughout the world (Olson & Defrain, 2000; Original, Emebette and



Mellesse, 2004; WHO, 2005). The victims consider it as a private matter and “minor violence’s” such as shoving, slapping, pinching, threatening, insulting and yelling at are literally “accepted” by most wives in many countries including Ethiopia. Complaints might be heard concerning major/severe assaults such as stabbing, serious beating, burning and punching causing bruises. Most studies report that the violent husbands are “normal persons”, without any mental illness or major psychological problems. However, many tend to have lower self-esteem, consume alcohol regularly, lack social skills, show the desire for social dominance, been raised in violent families, and be emotional (Halford & Markman, 1997; Shaffer, 1988; Olson & Defrain, 2000).

Women are entitled to security and integrity of the person throughout the world. They are supposed to be free from all forms of violence in the home, community, workplace and in all public places (UN, 1993). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) states “everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person”(Article 3). It also states that “the family is the natural and fundamental group/unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State” (Articled 16-3). Furthermore, the OAU's Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1986) states that “the family shall be the natural unit of and basis of society. It shall be protected by the State which shall take care of its physical health and moral. The state shall also ensure the protection of the rights of the women and the children” (Article 18-1).

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995) states the following about the family, violence, and protection of the family.

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|--------------|---|
| Article 14   | Every person has the inviolable and inalienable right to life, the security of the person and liberty.  |
| Article 16   | Everyone has the right to protection against bodily harm.   |
| Article 34-1 | Men and women have the right to marry and found the family. They have equal rights while entering into, during a marriage and at the time of divorce. |
| Article34-3  | The family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state.                                     |
| Article 35-4 | The state shall enforce the right of women to eliminate the influences of harmful customs. Laws, customs and practices                                |

that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited.

The Ethiopian Penal Code-Article 537(1) states that "whosoever intentionally or by negligence causes bodily injury to another or impairs his health, by any means is punishable..." The provisions embrace bodily assaults, wounds, injuries and harm, damages to physical and mental health of individuals. The Cultural Policy (MIC, 1997) and the National Policy on Ethiopian Women (TGE, 1993) underscores that harmful practices will be abolished and the human rights of women will be respected. Despite the adoption of the UN conventions, the constitutional and legal stipulations, and the present and previous governments' rhetoric of protection of the family and human rights, family violence and harmful practices continue unabated. The commitments of the Government in general and the implementers in particular (the police, judiciary, the administrators) are questionable.

Habtamu's (1998a) study which involved nine ethnic groups in Ethiopia reported that wife battering takes place at least once a month in most families. It was also reported that beating wives is one of the methods used to resolve conflicts in many families. The Central Statistical Authority (CSA, 2001) made a national demographic and health survey in year 2000, which involved 15,367 women and 2,607 men as subjects. It was found that 85 percent of the women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she neglects the children, burns the food, argues with the husband, goes out someplace without telling him, and refuses to have sex with him. It is to be noted that 61% and 51% of the women agreed that the husbands are justified to beat their wives for arguing and refusing to have sex with them, respectively.

Empirical studies conducted in Butajira area (South Central Ethiopia) and Gonder area (North West Ethiopia) on large samples of women show that 71 % and 51 % respectively of ever-partnered women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (Tegbar, Anwar & Yigzaw, 2004; WHO, 2005). We can easily observe that family violence, mainly beating children and wives is "culturally accepted" and widely practiced human rights violation in Ethiopia. The precipitating factors for wife beating, actions spouses take when a partner is at fault, and strategies to use to eliminate (at least to reduce) wife beating need to be studied. [Child

beating is another major issue worth an independent study. Hence, it is not dealt with in this study].

### 3. Findings

The data are analyzed using thematic content analysis and percentages. First, the causes of family conflict as reported by the participants are presented. Then, reported reasons for wife beating follow. What spouses do when their partners are allegedly at fault is the third part. Finally, the suggestions made by the participants to reduce wife beating are presented.

#### Causes of Family Conflict

The responses of the participants are provided in Table 1. Poor living conditions, poor management of family income, jealousy/mistrust, husbands coming home drunk and poor communication (lack of understanding) are the major causes mentioned as a group. But the female participants thought that poor management of the family income, jealousy and husbands' coming home drunk are the main contributing factors to family conflict. It is to be noted that it is only the wives who stated that male chauvinism and wanting to dominate also serve as causes.

**Table 1:- Causes of Family Conflicts**

Sr. NO	Reported Causes*	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
1	Poor living/economic condition	11(47.83)	9 (27.22)	20 (35.71)
2	Mismanagement of family income (poor handling of family finances)	7 (30.43)	12 (36.36)	19 (33.93)
3	Jealousy ( <i>kinat</i> ), suspiciousness, mistrust	8 (34.78)	11 (33.33)	19 (33.93)
4	Husbands' coming home drunk	7 (30.43)	11 (33.33)	18 (32.14)
5	Misunderstandings and not listening to each other	7 (30.43)	8 (24.24)	15 (26.79)
6	Differences in interest and personality	4 (17.39)	6 (18.18)	10 (17.86)
7	Differences in raising children/on child matters	6 (26.09)	4 (12.12)	10 (17.86)
8	Interference of in-laws, relatives and neighbors	3 (13.04)	7 (21.21)	10 (17.86)
9	Husbands' coming home late in the evening	2 (8.70)	6 (18.18)	8 (14.29)

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10	Ethnic and religious differences	2 (8.70)	3 (9.09)	5 (8.93)
11	Incompatibility in sex	2 (8.70)	2 (6.06)	4 (7.14)
12	Being barren (Not having children)	2 (8.70)	1 (3.03)	3 (5.36)
13	Having many children (large family)	2 (8.70)	1 (3.03)	3 (5.36)
14	Insulting and using irritating language (provocation)	2 (8.70)	1 (3.03)	3 (5.36)
15	Listening to rumors and gossips about family members	1 (4.35)	2 (6.06)	3 (5.36)
16	Expressions of male dominance/chauvinism	0	3 (9.09)	3 (5.36)

\* Participants could list more than one cause. Causes mentioned by at least 3 participants are reported in the table. Raw scores and percentages (in brackets) are provided.

### Reasons for wife beating

Table 2 provides the list of the main (reported) reasons for beating wives. Suspicion of adultery, husbands' drunkenness, jealousy (*kinat*), husbands' desire to show dominance, misunderstandings and lack of discussion, and culturally accepted way of disciplining were listed. Proportionally larger number of the women than the men mentioned husbands' drunkenness and showing dominance as main reasons for the battering.

**Table 2:- Reported Reasons for Wife Beating**

Sr. NO	Reported Reasons*	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
1	Suspicion of adultery/infidelity	9 (39.13)	10 (30.30)	19 (33.93)
2	Husbands' being drunk (Drunkenness or excessive drinking)	5 (21.74)	10 (30.30)	15 (26.79)
3	Jealousy (sexual)	6 (26.09)	8 (24.24)	14 (25.00)
4	Husbands want to show dominance	4 (17.39)	10 (30.30)	14 (25.00)
5	Differences in thoughts and lack of discussion	4 (17.39)	7 (21.21)	11 (19.64)
6	Culturally accepted way of disciplining	5 (21.74)	5 (15.15)	10 (17.86)
7	When wife is extravagant (poor handling of family finances)	5 (21.74)	3 (9.09)	8 (14.29)
8	Poor economic condition/unfulfilled needs	3 (13.04)	5 (15.15)	8 (14.29)
9	Poor home management	5 (21.74)	2 (6.06)	7 (12.50)
10	Ignorance and not knowing better	3 (13.04)	3 (9.09)	6 (10.71)

11	One (usually wife) insulting the other (provocation)	3 (13.04)	2 (6.06)	5 (8.93)
12	When the wife belittles (undermines) the husband	3 (13.04)	2 (6.06)	5 (8.93)
13	Listening to rumors and gossips	2 (8.70)	2 (6.06)	4 (7.14)
14	When one does not listen and /or accept faults	2 (8.70)	1 (3.03)	3 (5.36)
15	Large family	1 (4.35)	2 (6.06)	3 (5.36)

\*Each participant could report more than one reason. Reasons listed by at least 3 participants are reported here, in raw scores and percentages (in brackets).

### Actions Taken When Spouses Are at Fault

Two separate questions, one in the first and the second in the later part of the questionnaire were posed to the subjects on what they do when their spouses are at fault. The responses are listed in Tables 3 and 4. It is reported that the husbands beat, kick them out of home and counsel their wives (Table 3). Getting angry at wives, discussing the problem and asking for elders' interference are also listed as some of the common actions taken by the husbands.

Calling on elders/relatives, discussing the problem, leaving home, and tolerating the problem are the main actions taken by the wives when their husbands are at fault (Table 4). It is to be noted that it is the women who go to the elders and try to discuss the problem more than the men.

**Table 3: What Husbands Do When Their Wives Are at Fault**

Sr. NO	Actions Taken*	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
1	Beat, hit them	15 (65.21)	16 (48.48)	31 (55.36)
2	Kick them out of home	8 (34.78)	8 (24.24)	16 (28.57)
3	Counsel/advise them	6 (26.09)	8 (24.24)	14 (25.00)
4	Get angry at them	5 (21.74)	7 (21.21)	12 (21.43)
5	Discuss the issue/ the problem	3 (13.04)	8 (24.24)	11 (19.64)
6	Ask for elders' interference	2 (8.70)	8 (24.24)	10 (17.36)
7	Be upset and shut them off (maakuref)	4 (17.39)	5 (15.15)	9 (16.07)
8	Insult them (use nasty words)	5 (21.74)	4 (12.12)	9 (16.07)
9	Ask for divorce	2 (8.70)	5 (15.15)	7 (12.50)

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10	Withhold monthly expenses' money	2 (8.70)	3 (9.09)	5 (8.93)
11	Drink alcohol, come late in the evening	2 (8.70)	2 (6.06)	4 (7.14)
12	Report to the police or kebele	1 (4.35)	2 (6.06)	3 (5.36)
13	Do nothing/Ignore the problem	2 (8.70)	1 (3.03)	3 (5.36)

\*Each participant could list more than one action. Actions mentioned by at least 3 participants are reported above, in raw scores and percentages (in brackets).

**Table 4: What Wives Do When Their Husbands Are at Fault**

Sr. NO	Actions Taken*	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
1	Summon/call on elders, relatives	6 (26.09)	17 (51.51)	23 (41.07)
2	Try to discuss and resolve the problem	6 (26.09)	12 (36.36)	18 (32.14)
3	Leave home	8 (34.78)	6 (16.18)	14 (25.00)
4	Be quiet and tolerate them	5 (21.74)	8 (24.24)	13 (23.21)
5	Tell to husbands' friends to advise them	5 (21.74)	5 (15.15)	10 (17.86)
6	Show irritation and ignore them (maakuref)	4 (17.39)	4 (12.12)	8 (14.29)
7	Insult them (using nasty words)	4 (17.39)	3 (9.09)	7 (12.50)
8	Nag them to improve (mechekchek)	2 (8.70)	4 (12.12)	6 (10.71)
9	Go to kebele or police and complain	2 (8.70)	2 (6.06)	4 (7.14)
10	Cry/weep	1 (4.35)	3 (9.09)	4 (7.14)
11	Threaten to leave them	1 (4.35)	2 (6.06)	3 (5.36)

\*Each participant could list several actions. Actions mentioned by at least 3 participants are reported above, in raw scores and percentages (in brackets).

### To Eliminate Wife Beating

The participants were asked to suggest actions/steps to take to reduce and to eliminate wife beating in the community. Steps/actions suggested are listed in Table 5. Teaching the public and couples about the habit of discussion and tolerance, providing marriage and family life education to the youth, improvement of the economic conditions of families, teaching of human

rights education to the public, and taking of serious legal measures on those who are violent are steps/actions suggested by a large number of the participants. Proportionally larger number of women than men mentioned counseling of husbands who get drunk and the provision of legal support to the battered women, as actions to take to reduce/eliminate wife beating.

**Table 5: What to Do to Reduce/Eliminate Wife Beating**

Sr.No.	Steps/Actions Suggested*	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
1	Teach people the habit of discussion	7(30.43)	10(30.30)	17(30.36)
2	Teach couples about relationship, tolerance	8(34.78)	7(21.21)	15(26.79)
3	People are to learn about marriage and family life	5(21.74)	8(24.24)	13(23.21)
4	Improve the economic situation of families	5(21.74)	8(24.24)	13(23.21)
5	Teach the youth about human and women's rights	6(26.09)	6(18.18)	12(21.43)
6	Take serious legal measures on those who beat their wives	5(21.74)	7(21.21)	12(21.43)
7	Counsel husbands not to be drunk	2(8.70)	7(21.21)	9(16.07)
8	Teach wives not to insult husbands	4(17.39)	3(9.09)	7(12.50)
9	Wives are to tolerate and show love	3(13.04)	3(9.09)	6(10.71)
10	Mass media should discourage all kinds of violence	2(8.70)	4(12.12)	6(10.71)
11	Provide legal support to battered women	0	4(12.12)	4(7.14)
12	The culture is to change	1(4.35)	3(9.09)	4(7.14)
13	Counsel husbands through elders	1(4.35)	2(6.06)	3(5.36)

\*Each participant could list several actions/steps to take. Steps/actions listed by at least 3 participants are reported above, in raw scores and percentages (in brackets).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Despite constitutional and other legal provisions, family violence is highly prevalent throughout Ethiopia. Empirical studies conducted in Gonder and Butajira areas have documented that over 50% of the women experience some type of violence in their life. Though the exact numbers of the victims or the perpetrators are not known at national level, all indications are that the majority of Ethiopian families are affected by inter-personal violence-particularly violence against children and women (ANPPCAN, 1999;

EWLA, 200/01; FSS, 2002; Panos, 2002; Habtamu, Hirut, Yusuf & Konjit, 2004; WHO, 2005).

The dominant culture seems to foster male dominance and wife battering. Wife battering represents a hidden obstacle to socio-economic development, democratization and respecting of human rights. Family violence harms the victims, is against the law, is harmful to the family and the society at large. The victims suffer various physical injuries and psychological harms/problems. Children growing up in a violent family can experience various emotional problems and also learn the behavior to implement in their later (marital) life. Family breakdown, disrespect for women, feelings of shame and inadequacy among the members could also develop. It saps women's energy, undermines their confidence and compromises their health. It leads to lost working hours of the spouses, elders, relatives, and legal personnel (the police, judges, etc-if they ever get involved). It would also lead to family breakdown (divorce, separation) and health expenditures. It is also serious violation of the Ethiopian Constitution and human rights stipulations.

The legal documents state that all forms of violence against women are prohibited, causes and traditional practices are to be eliminated and perpetrators of violence against women are to be punished. However, the deep-rooted cultural practice of disciplining and conflict resolution continues. The general public's attitude towards violence seems ambiguous. Violence is both condemned and admired. The author has heard on several occasions that pinching and slapping wives is a sign of affection/love. Perhaps, it is an appeal to tradition to defend men's domination and to control women's behavior. In-depth social-psychological studies might be in order.

There are some similarities and differences on the causes of conflict and violence between the Western societies and Ethiopia. The obvious differences include issues of poverty, interference of in-law and relatives, and listening to rumors and gossips, which contribute to family conflicts in Ethiopia. Though statistical correlations are not done in the Ethiopian context, wife battering is related to child physical punishment and abuse, and economic poverty, which is similar to other countries (Olson & Defrain, 2000; Hubbard & Wise, 1998; Oyekanni, 2000; WHO, 2005). The CSA (2001) national study shows that the educated and urban persons support



wife beating less than those who are not educated and rural residents. This is also similar to some findings in other countries.

Due to the cultural pressure violence is part of intimate relationship. It is assumed that husbands can beat (discipline) wives once in a while; it is a shame to expose family matters to outsiders such as the police (since elders and friends will settle the matter). Due to lack of resources to support self and children, overwhelming majority of the wives accept the situation and suffer silently. This is not reflected in most of the Western literature reviewed. Perhaps, the reason for the large number of divorces (about 50%) in the West is due to the availability of options, resources, functional legal system and better respect for individual rights.

The constitutional and other legal provisions are not implemented throughout the country. Various human rights are widely violated by the Government organs, social groups and individuals (Habtamu, 2002). For instance, abduction and rape, female genital mutilation, early (below 18 years) marriages, arbitrary arrest and detention, restrictions on freedom of the press, and lack of fair trial are prevalent throughout the country. A recent study that involved Oromia, Amhara and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' regions reported that the situations concerning abduction and rape, early marriage and females' genital mutilation has not changed (reduced) much in the past several years. The practices are continuing as accepted and normal behaviors (FSS, 2002). Perhaps, the nature and magnitude of family violence is also continuing at the same rate for decades.

The need for the development of a "culture of peace" throughout the world has already been recognized and efforts are being made by world organizations such as the UN (1999), UNESCO (1998), and others. It is highly implicated by this study that the respect for human rights, peaceful settlement of conflicts, development of skills of dialogue and negotiation, listening to each other and skills of communication have to be taught to the youth in various formal and non-formal educational settings. Critical thinking, assertiveness, non-violent conflict resolution skills, and notions of empathy would have to be developed and be reflected in various interpersonal interactions and relations in the community at large.

There is a lot of work to do in the families, schools, communities, the media, the legal system, and the society at large to bring about changes in the reduction of family violence and respecting of human rights. The

following are the main recommendations forwarded to improve the situation in the next few years.

1. Children, the youth and adults are not aware of human rights in general. Citizens of the country need to be aware of the main contents of international bill of human rights (UN, 1948, 1976a, 1976b), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), the Ethiopian Constitution (FDRE, 1995) and other relevant proclamations and conventions. Peace and human rights education manuals, textbooks and reading materials would have to be prepared in a language that is understandable to the average person. It should be offered in formal and non-formal education programs at all levels. Agriculture extension programs, various literacy programs, the radio and other media could be of some use.
2. Child rearing practices, the total socialization processes and the dominant cultural and traditional practices have to be looked into. Those values and practices, which correlate well with human rights standards, democratic values and respecting of everyone's rights, would have to be encouraged and developed. Those which violate human rights and retard peace and development have to be discouraged and eliminated.
3. Family life education, which includes issues of sexuality, family planning, relationships and methods of conflicts resolution (social skills, communication) has to be offered informal and non-formal education programs. Perhaps heavy dosage should be given to adolescents (at high school level) and to would-be teachers being trained at various colleges and institutes.
4. Holding awareness raising workshops and seminars on rights issues throughout the country might be helpful. Training (convincing) community leaders (elders), church and mosque leaders, administrators and relevant others could reduce some of the rights violations and violence against women.
5. The police, prosecutors, judges, kebele and woreda administrators should receive adequate education and training on human rights issues, particularly on women and children's rights. Provision of counseling, rehabilitation, and legal services to the victims of violence need to be considered by the relevant agencies.

6. Taking serious measures (penalties, detention, etc.) on the perpetrators of violence on women has been overdue. The Ethiopian Government, from the Parliament to kebele level, has to be committed to the human rights standards and to the implementation of its own constitution and international laws adopted. In this regard, the roles of local/community administrators, the police, the prosecutors and the judges will be immense.
  7. Since Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, conducting empirical studies which are more comprehensive and involving most ethnic groups in rural and urban settings are also recommended. The findings of such studies would have to be debated, general consensus reached and strategies developed to democratize the family relationships.
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