

ASSESSMENT ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS IN IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN EASTERN ZONE OF TIGRAY NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

This cross-sectional descriptive research study investigated the involvement of the unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional State, using primary and secondary data sources. The data collected through questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive analysis whereas the data collected through interview and secondary sources were analyzed using thematic analysis. The push factors for the involvement of children in irregular migration were economic and social problems in their home country whereas the pull factors were better income and job opportunities in Saudi Arabia. Findings showed that heavy costs of transport, inability to repay loan, difficulty of adapting to Saudi Arabia's environment, social discrimination, physical and sexual abuses were negative consequences of irregular migration on the unaccompanied minors. The lack of implementing the existing anti-irregular migration laws, lack of awareness creation trainings on the effect of irregular migration, and the complex tactics of smugglers were challenges limiting reduction in the involvement of minor's in irregular migration. It also found that "proclamation no. 909/2015" is more of curative than preventive. The study recommended job creation, awareness creation/ training, taking effective measures on the smugglers, and modifying the 'proclamation no 909/2015' in a preventive approach would reduce the irregular migration.

Keywords: unaccompanied minors, irregular migration, human trafficking, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

Migration as a movement of people within and across national boundaries has increasingly become an integral part of human existence (Adamnesh, 2006). However, international migration has become a major topic of international politics and debate since 1960s. This is due to an increase in the scale of international population movements, in the number of global institutions shaping the level, and pattern of international migration. In the 1960s, only a handful of countries mainly the traditional immigration nations in North America and Oceania were considerably affected by global migration. By the 1990s, and in today's globalized world, virtually every nation was influenced in some way by

international migration, or immigration or emigration of different classes (Wondwosen *et al.*, 2006).

Irregular migration as one aspect of international migration is becoming the concern of the world community; posing a considerable threat to the individual peoples, family, society and state security. Above all, it affects the migrants' dignity and safety, their family, society and national security of the home states, transit and destination states in different ways (IOM, 2004). Unaccompanied minors under the age eighteen involved in irregular migration have been among the most vulnerable groups because they are exposed to involuntary works and sexual abuse. The lack of certification from their motherland has made it hard to legalize their migration position and



get social services when they arrive in the destination country (HRC, 2016).

Africa has become internationally known for its migration issues and problems from the 1980s because of the slave trade (forced migration), intra and inter-state war, ethnic fighting, and drought, throughout of its history (IOM, 2004). From this time onwards, the Horn of Africa became the main migrant generating region in the world (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009). Indeed, the illegal cross border migration mainly was to Western Europe, but also to North America and the Arab region/ Middle East. This is likely to intensify further due to environmental, business recessions, wars, severe droughts, lack of work in their locality, and for the sake of better livelihood by journeying outside their home country (Adepoju, 2008).

Ethiopia, which is located in the Horn of Africa, is known for its own dynamics and patterns of migration. It has faced both legitimate and illegitimate migrant flows all over its history. However, noticeable out- migration from Ethiopia began in late 1970s following the political upheavals and the bloody revolution, which was spearheaded by a military regime that took over power in 1974. Originally, it was limited to the urban-based elite, especially the young and the educated people because of political reasons and sought refuge in the West. Eventually, out- migration became part of the life and aspirations of most people, who became increasingly aware of the existence of a world where the grass was greener. By the mid-1980s, even Ethiopian peasants began flocking to the Middle East and the Gulf area in search of jobs and better pay (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009).

Along with the context of irregular migration, Ethiopia faced unaccompanied minors where minors are migrated illegally to Saudi Arabia and other foreign countries (Ibid). Especially migration of such type is happening in Ethiopia due to the ecological and economic downturns, and low employment opportunity in the country. Consequently, minors

migrate for search of better job abroad. The migrant minors contribute remittance, and engage in investment in home country which intern motivated the rest youth to migrate. However, the minors have faced economic, social and psychological problems in the destination country and after they deported to their country. Though the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration has been increasing over the past years, no studies have been undertaken on this area.

Hence, this study assessed the involvement of unaccompanied children in illegal migration in Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional State with reference to relevant theories of migration (King, 2012) especially the mobility transition theory of migration and the social network theory of migration (Clemens, 2014; Haug, 2008), considering the fact that they encompass broad social and economic problems as well as different pull factors that motivate the migrants to migrate legally or illegally. The study assessed the push and pull factors that caused the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration, investigated the negative effect of irregular migration on them, and identified the challenges faced in reducing their involvement in irregular migration. Besides, the study *assessed the effectiveness of the legal frameworks towards preventing the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration.*

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study applied cross-sectional research design based on descriptive survey. Hence, mixed research approach was used for the purpose of triangulation of the data along with primary and secondary sources of data.

Sampling Techniques: The study employed purposive and snowball sampling technique. Purposive sampling was used to select four Woredas from the nine administrative units with the higher involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in the study area. The woredas selected





were Gulomekada, SaesieTsaedaemba, Ganta-Afeshum, and Wukro-kilteawlaelo (eight kebeles, two from each woreda). Snowball-sampling technique was applied to reach at the returnees. Snowballing technique was followed because there was no sampling frame available for the returnees. In this study, 150 unaccompanied minor returnees, 50 unaccompanied minor returnee families, and 16 members of command posts from the 4 woredas totally 216 were participated.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: The unaccompanied minors (children) with an age of 18 or below involved in irregular migration and migrated away from Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional state to Saudi Arabia, either deported or returned before they arrived in Saudi Arabia were included in the study otherwise they were excluded from the study.

Ethical Considerations: In research, ethical consideration is one of the most important points that deserve attention. This is mainly to strictly respect the consent of the participants whether they are willing to participate in the research or not. Likewise, it is to assure to the subjects of the study are free to withdraw from participating in the study whenever they found it necessary, and the necessity to protect subjects of the study from possible dangers that might be encountered. Thus, this research was strictly governed by the above ethical principles.

Instruments of Data Collection: Questionnaire, key informant interview and document review were the instruments of data collection. The questionnaire had two parts. The first part was about demographic characteristics of respondents whereas the second part consisted items related to the irregular migration. Moreover, semi structured interview was made with the unaccompanied minor returnee families, and members of the command posts from the four woredas to illicit thick and in-depth information.

Methods of Data Analysis: The study employed quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. The quantitative data collected using questionnaire was analyzed by simple descriptive statistics whereas qualitative data gathered through key informant interview was analyzed using thematic analysis. Besides, Different journals, researches outputs and policy documents related to the topic were reviewed.

RESULTS

This section is the report of the findings of the study based upon the methodology applied to gather information. It stated the findings of the research arranged in a reasonable way.

General Information of Unaccompanied Minors: This involved sex, level of education, and residential areas of the minors. The charts 1-3 below give a brief highlight of these demographic characteristics of the minors.



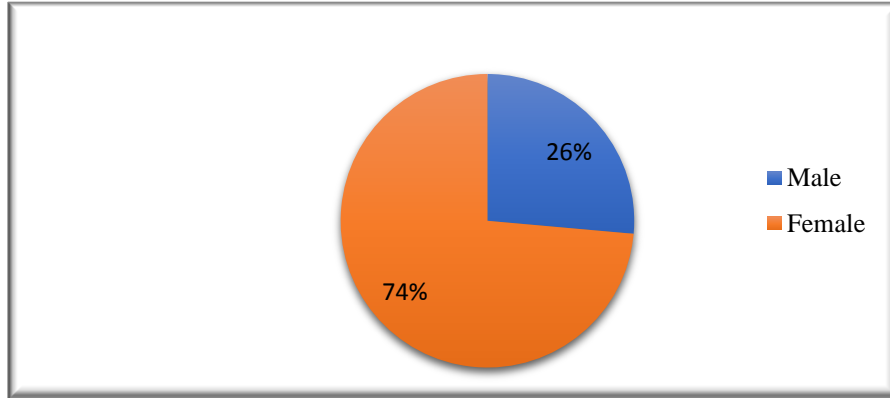


CHART 1: Sex of the Unaccompanied Minors
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018

According to the chart 1 above, 78% of the respondents were females and 28% males. This result is supported by the members of the woreda command posts and argued that females of the woredas were

migrating to Saudi Arabia with most of them deported to their home. This shows that female children were highly migrating illegally than males.

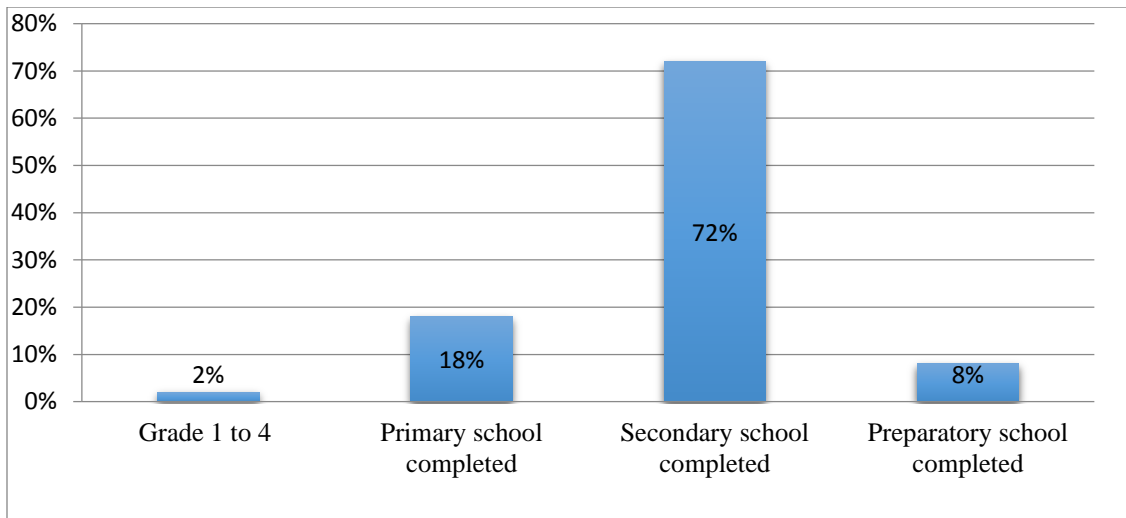


CHART 2: Educational Level of the Unaccompanied Minors
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018



Regarding educational level, 72% of the respondents were secondary school completed, 18% were primary school completed, and 15% were secondary school completed followed by 8% preparatory school completed. The returnee’s family also argued that

when their children fail to succeed to the next grade they immediately migrated to Saudi Arabia. This shows that most of the minors involving in the irregular migration were grade ten completed due to inability to succeed to the preparatory school.

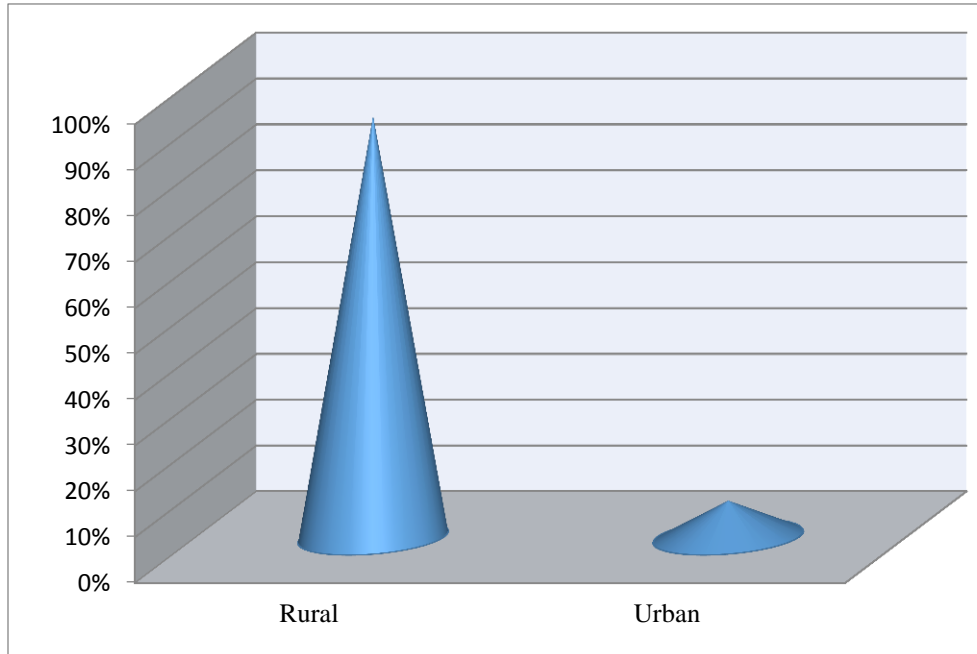


CHART 3: Residential Area of Unaccompanied Minors
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018

The above chart 3 shows that, 92% of the returnee minors migrating irregularly were from the rural areas whereas 8% of them were from the urban areas. The interviewed members of the woreda command posts of Eastern Zone of Tigray also supported this

idea and argued that almost all of the minors involved in the irregular migration were coming from the rural areas. The residents of the rural area were therefore more vulnerable to irregular migration than those who live in the urban area.



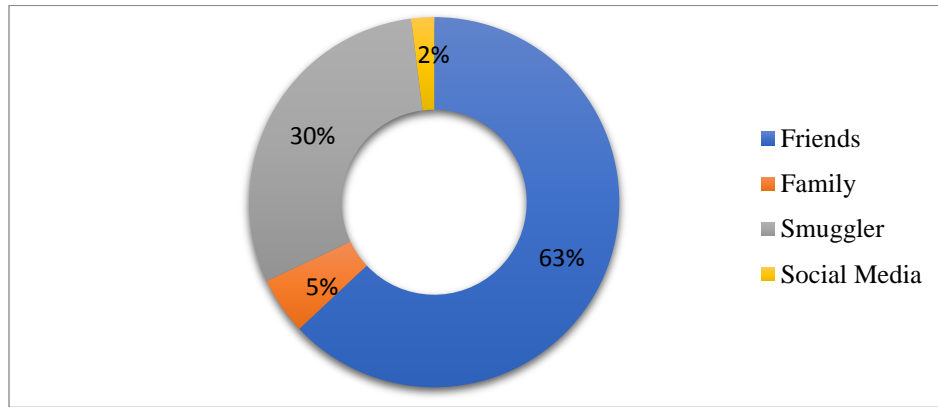


CHART 4: Source of Information about Migration
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018

As indicated in the chart 4 above, 65% of the respondents stated that the main source of information for their migration was their friends followed by a smuggler that counts 30%. The interviewed members of the woreda command posts of Eastern zone Tigray National State asserted that, their friends who work in Saudi Arabia and illegal brokers are the two main source of information that

helped the unaccompanied minors to migrate illegally. Besides, the returnee families argued that, smugglers cheated the unaccompanied minors to be involved in the irregular migration. Hence, the migrants who are working in Saudi Arabia and the smugglers were the two main source of information that impules the potential migrants migrate to Saudi Arabia.

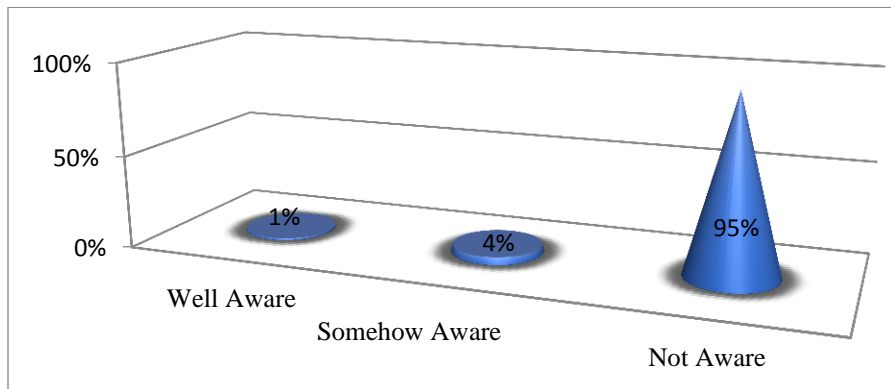


CHART 5: Level of awareness of the Minors about the Destination’s Culture, Environment and nature of job
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018



The above chart 5 shows that, 95% of the respondents replied they did not have any information about the destination countries environment, culture and way of life. Supporting this, the families of the unaccompanied minors claimed that their children went without any information of their destination. Substantiating this, interviewed members of the woreda command posts argued that, though some of the migrant minors collect information from their friends and the illegal brokers. Nevertheless, they found the information that they

got did not reflect the realities as they tell them only the good thing. Likewise, the unaccompanied minors did not know the nature of the work in Saudi Arabia.

Causes for the Involvement of Unaccompanied Minors in Irregular Migration:

This section presented the push and pull factors that cause unaccompanied minors to involve in the irregular migration away from the Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional state to Saudi Arabia.

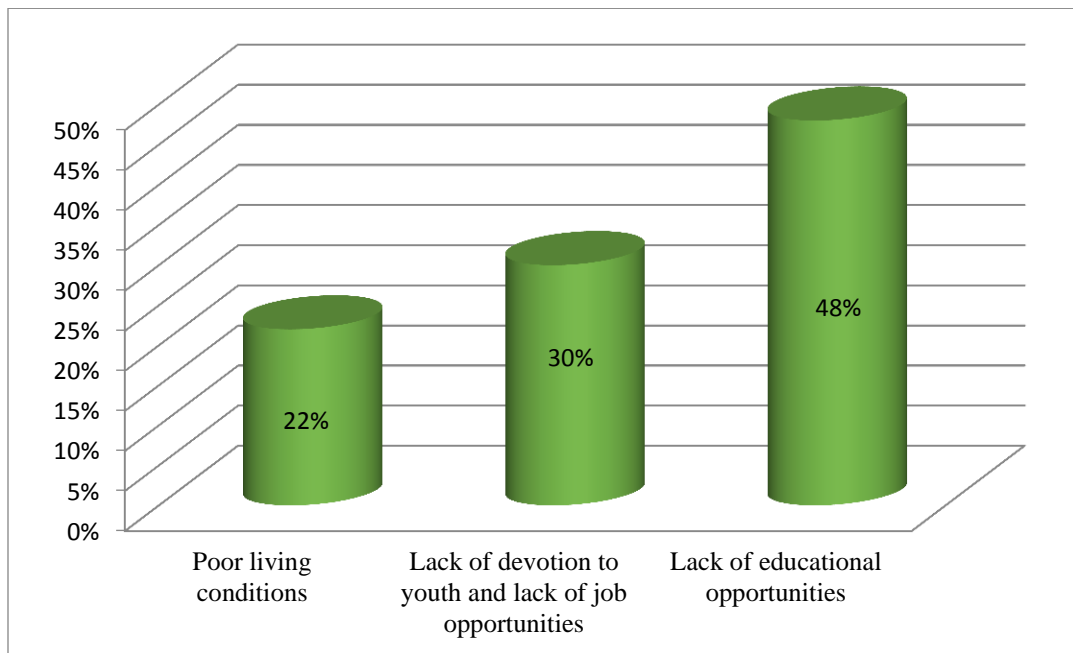


CHART 6: Push Factors for the Involvement of Unaccompanied Minors in Irregular Migration
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018

As revealed in the chart 6, 48% of the unaccompanied minors replied that the inability to succeed to the next grade level was the main pushing factor for minors’ involvement in irregular migration.

The families of the returnees added that, when their children fail to the preparatory school they feel stresses and opted irregular migration as an alternative. Besides, 30% of the respondents



ascertained that lack of devotion to the minors and lack of job opportunities in their woreda has become a push factor for the minors migration whereas the rest 22% rated that the poor living condition at home as a cause that forced migrants out to Saudi Arabia for search of better job.

According to the interview with the unaccompanied minor returnee’s families, the push factors were associated with economic and social problems of minors within their place of origin forced to migrate

to Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the families of the minors stated that their children were migrated due to a lack of local job opportunities, poverty, and poor living condition whereas the social push factors were related to lack of social services such as education and other infrastructures. This was more acute for unaccompanied minors who were unable to pass to the next grade level failing to achieve good educational result. The interview conducted with members of the woreda command posts also revealed the same thing.

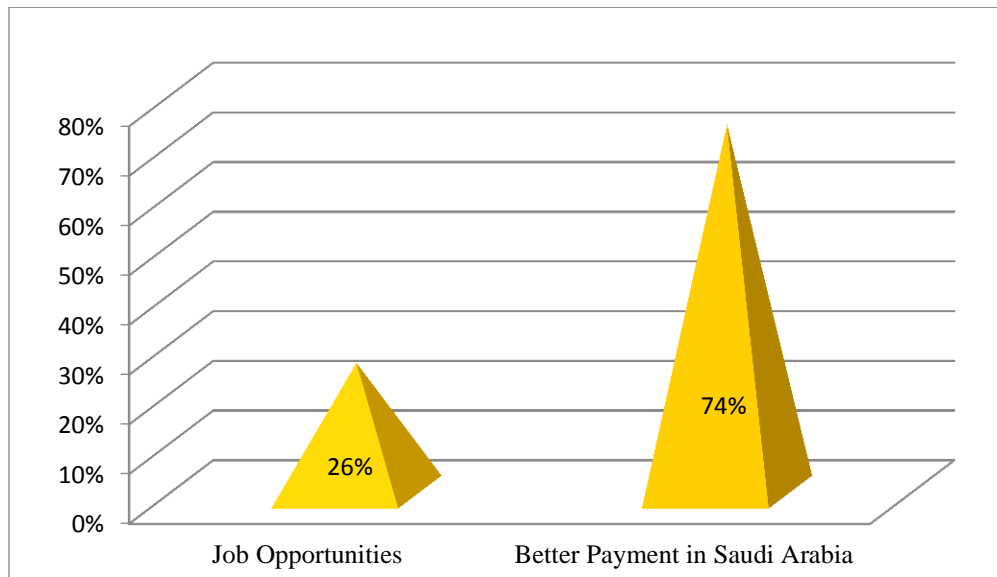


CHART 7: Pull Factors for the Involvement of Unaccompanied Minors in Irregular Migration
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018

As presented in the chart 7 above, 74% of the returnees replied that the better payment in Saudi Arabia pulled the minors to follow their friends followed by better job opportunities that count 26%.

Supporting this, the interview conducted with the unaccompanied minors returnees’ families revealed

that, pull factors of irregular migration has become another cause for the involvement of unaccompanied minors in illegal migration in Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional State to Saudi Arabia. In this regard, the availability of better income and job opportunities in Saudi Arabia were prominent. The unaccompanied minor returnee families further



affirmed that better job and income opportunities in Saudi Arabia made minors to migrate. As firmly claimed by the interviewed members of the woreda command posts, unaccompanied minors have shown increasing trend from time to time.

The Effect of Irregular Migration on the Unaccompanied Minors:

The major economic, social and psychological problems faced to unaccompanied minors involved in irregular migration are briefly discussed below.

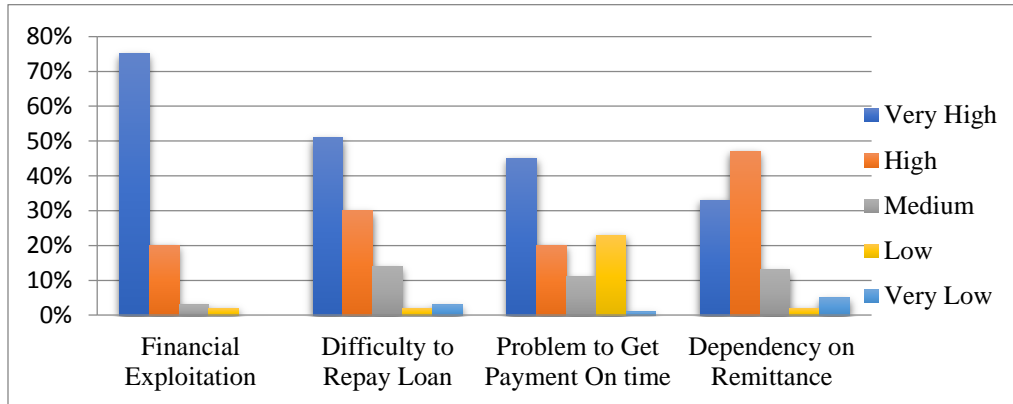


CHART 8: Economic Problems of Irregular Migration on the Unaccompanied Minors
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018

With regard to economic problems of irregular migration on the unaccompanied minors, 75% and 20% of the minors argued that the level of financial exploitation was very high and high respectively as indicated in chart 8. In relation to this, the families of the unaccompanied minor returnees rated the transportation cost too high that drags in to financial burden of the migrants. The journey to arrive at Saudi Arabia takes a minimum of 18 days up to three months, which in turn obliges high transport cost.

Unaccompanied minors initially enter in to agreement with a smuggler about the amount of money to be paid for travel expense up to the destination country that ranged from 500 up to 1000 dollar. However, the minors were later forced to pay extra money other than the primary at different terminals to new smugglers. Moreover, the unaccompanied minors were even unable to repay their loan due to difficulty of getting their payment on time, and were early deported.



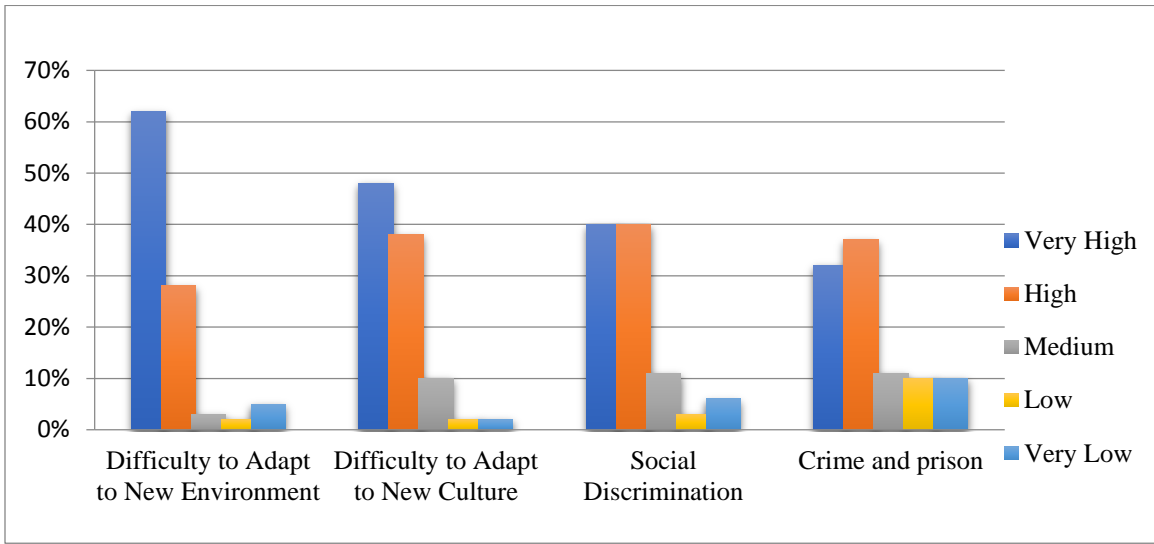


CHART 9: Social Challenges of Irregular Migration on the Unaccompanied Minors
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018

As specified in the chart 9 above, the result of the overall social challenges on accompanied minors is very serious. To put it separately, 90% of the minors faced difficulty to adapt to the new environment. Besides, 86% of the minors were faced a difficulty of adapting the new culture, religion and language and most of the returnees faced social isolation.

The interview with the unaccompanied minor returnee families holds that minors have faced difficulties of adapting the environment of Saudi Arabia, and accustom of their culture. This is partly because the environment and culture of their home country and Saudi Arabia is different. Furthermore,

the interviewed members of command posts of the woredas noted that the minors have faced social challenges given the fact that remittance money were spent on immediate family consumptions and repayment of loans that create disagreement between the returnees and their families. This in turn creates feeling of worthless on the returnees themselves. As affirmed by members of command posts, the situation of migrants become worst, when the deported children enter in to different criminal activities like theft and hanging after they finish their money brought from Saudi Arabia. Such criminal activities exposed the migrants to prison and feel discriminated from their parents and the community.



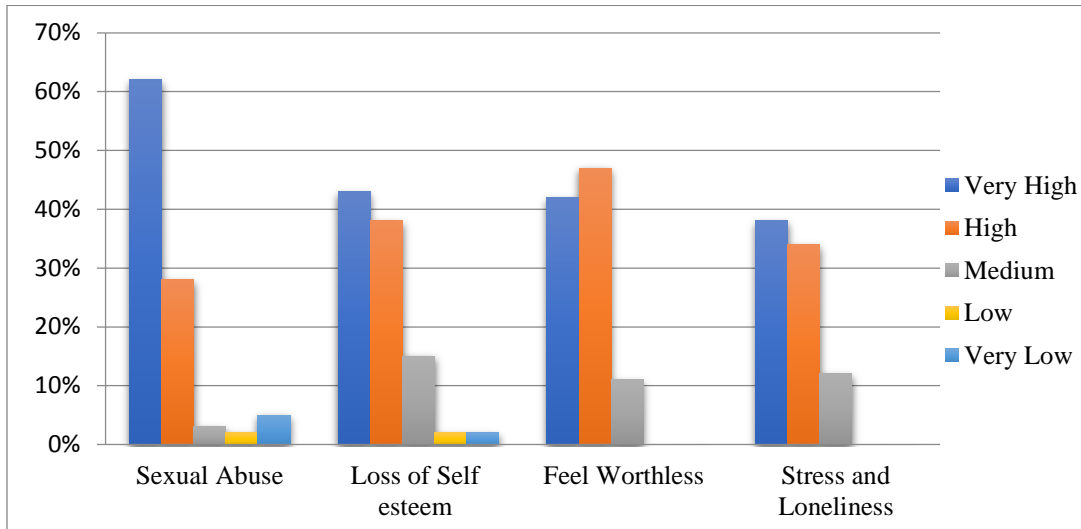


Chart 10: Psychological Negative Effect of Irregular Migration on the Unaccompanied Minors
Source: Own Survey Data, 2018

Psychological negative effects were also another effect of irregular migration on unaccompanied minors themselves. As illustrated in the chart 10 above, 90% of the respondents argued that sexual abuse is found at its highest level, and 81% of the respondents replied that there was high level of loss of self-esteem on the unaccompanied minors. The interviewed members of the woreda command posts and the families of the returnees pointed out that, female children migrant were often among the most vulnerable to sexual abuse by the smugglers, and the male immigrants. This is mostly related to their natural condition where such children are naturally female.

Challenges Faced in Fighting Unaccompanied Minors Involvement in Irregular Migration: This part of the study presented the challenges faced in fighting unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration.

Implementation Gap: The interviewed members of the woreda command posts claimed that the laws related to smuggling and human trafficking had not

implemented effectively. No sufficient and justified corrective measure was imposed over illegal brokers.

Lack of Integration of Stakeholders: According to the key informants of the members of the woreda command posts, fighting unaccompanied minors’ irregular migration needs effective stakeholders’ participation-individual, local, regional, and federal. However, the fragmented way of fighting migration by stakeholders, and hesitancy of the community to expose smugglers has made curbing minors migration difficult task.

Lack of Awareness Creation Trainings on the Effect of Irregular Migration: The interviewed members of the woreda command posts argued that, there was no sufficient awareness promoting training given to minors who were interested to migrate. Migrants’ were not aware of the overall situations in Saudi Arabia, and they simply migrate on the anticipation of income and job opportunities. As a result, unaccompanied children’s irregular migration has been increasing.



Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Smugglers Tactics: According to the key informants' of the members of the woreda command posts, the complex nature of the smugglers tactic has become a challenge to a government and security officials to tackle the problem of minors migration. Obviously, human trafficking and smuggling often happened in dark and cool places that made smugglers persecution difficult.

Analysis on the Effectiveness of the Legal Frameworks towards Preventing the Involvement of Unaccompanied Minor in Irregular Migration: As per the interviewed members of the woreda command posts, the problem of children trafficking has been increasing over time, and smugglers' cheating to unaccompanied minors had been exacerbating in the Eastern zone of Tigray. The proclamation no. 909/2015 is more of curative not preventive to the irregular migration. It mainly focused on punishing smugglers for their crime rather than taking preventing mechanisms. The proclamation emphasized curative approach than preventive approach of fighting the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration. Though the FDRE government has a constitutional responsibility to ensure citizen's safety and respect their freedom of movement, the efforts of combating irregular migration in general and the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in particular so far were unsuccessful. Whatsoever the proclamation emphasized on curative approach, the smugglers who involved in minors smuggling were not persecuted and punished. Besides, less attention children and children focused opportunities, the curative nature of the legal framework, and the lack of integration among stakeholders has resulted in to more involvement of the minors in illegal migration.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed that causes for the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration have been the interplay of push and pull factors. The push-pull factor is concerned with reasons for minor

irregular migration from their country to Saudi Arabia.

The push factors are negative conditions at their respective woredas that push the minors to migrate. The minors who were unable to be successful in their school leaving examinations prove more vulnerable to illegal migration and human trafficking, and this had undeniable push factor on the involvement of unaccompanied minors that contributed to increasing trend of children migrants of Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional State Woredas. The study area is also prone to illegal migration due to the poor living condition and lack of job opportunities. The inability of the government to expand job opportunities and devote to the youth has led the youths migrate illegally to Saudi Arabia. In relation to this, Adamnesh (2006) claimed that the pushing factors for the involvement of the unaccompanied minor in irregular migration were mainly due to scarce of job opportunity, the unavailability of living facilities and poor educational system. The push factors particularly the economic or social problems in Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional state where they force minors to migrate from their homeland.

The pull factors are attractions of the destination states that motivate minors to migrate from their homeland to another country. With respect to this, the expectation of the unaccompanied minors to get high income and better job opportunities were among the main pull factors for their involvement in irregular migration. Children heard from their friends that there is better job opportunity and better payment along with the value of exchange rate. Supporting this idea Birhan (2011) stated that, the factors that attract minors to migrate constitute expectation of high wages, employment opportunities, housing conditions, better income opportunities, and better healthcare. Their involvement is increasing from time to time, which implies the likeliness of increasing trend of children irregular migration in the future. The culture of reluctance to expose traffickers by the victims and the community in general have





significant share on the involvements of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration. This shows that the community, media and the different levels of government from the kebele up to the federal government did not work to ensure the provision of information and awareness creation about the effect of irregular migration. Generally, the study by Birhanu and Nackhimuth (2017) found that push factors predominate than the pull factors in Ethiopia, and this is true in Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional State.

The study also claimed that in Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional State irregular migration has economic, social, and psychological negative effects on the unaccompanied minors migrated to Saudi Arabia. With respect to the economic problems, the unaccompanied minor returnees frequently return empty pocket having lost their savings or belongings abroad or never having acquired opportunity to earn and save money. Specifically, repaying of loan was painful process. Financial instability was very serious as most of the minor migrants took loans at high interest rates. Even some of the minors deported before covering their loan that created a conflict and unnecessary disagreement among the minor families and the creditors. In this manner, Mesfin (2011) claimed that, most of unaccompanied minor returnees faced refusal by their families and the community as they failed to meet expectations to return with adequate material wealth so that, they felt humiliation, and unproductive. Likewise, the Human Right Watch (2015) argued that, many youth migrants returned with no means to pay for transportation to their home areas due at times their employer failed to pay their salary and Saudi Arabia's arbitrary refused to allow them to take their personal property before deported.

The returnees have also faced social challenges like social discrimination in Saudi Arabia and after they were returned/deported to their country. Upon arrival at Saudi Arabia, minors disintegrated from their family ties and bondages that increased feeling of being isolated. Even when they deported to their

home country, they come up with different addictions so that the society discriminated them. Moreover, migrants face difficulties with an entirely new social environment, culture, language and religion in Saudi Arabia. Even when they deported to their home country they come up with different social evils so that social segregation, crime, and prison is their fate. The unaccompanied minor returnees have faced psychological negative effects which include sexual abuse, loss of self-esteem, feel worthless, rape against women, psychological mug, malnutrition, imprisonment, and bit by snakes, ship crush and falling in the sea, and death in the journey to Saudi Arabia, stress, and loneliness that negatively affect the lives of the unaccompanied minors. In relation to this, Global Migration Group (2012) argued that, the challenges faced to migrants were intensified in the case of youth especially those under 18 years of age particularly face pressures of abuse, trading, imprisonment and banishment. Therefore, unaccompanied minors psychological wellbeing, their self-esteem, confidence, values were seriously affected and threatened that put them at risk of becoming addicted to different substances and involved in different criminal acts. The minors working in Saudi Arabia were suffering from physical and sexual abuse like deaths, torture, rape and sexual attack, abduction, and kidnapping. Generally, the type of job/work in their home country and abroad was different. The job in the Saudi Arabia was heavy and tight particularly for females. Female migrants did not have adequate leisure time for recreation and time to communicate effectively with their families via telephone. Most female children found their liberty and freedoms violated. This was particularly acute to the migrants who were exposed to physical violence, heavy work burden, long working hours per day, and denial of salary payment. This affects their psychological wellbeing, jeopardizes their self-esteem and feels shocked. The children migrants were exposed to physical violence, intolerable job, long working hours per day, and denial of salary payment.



Despite the boosting nature of the problem of irregular migration on the minors, the potential migrants and their families pointed their finger to the individuals worked in Saudi Arabia and returned home with the money they saved. Then after, they engaged on investments, such as building hotels, buying cars, and mini-buses. Some other migrants send remittance to families at their home country to feed their families for daily consumption and investment facilities. This situation has motivated the rest youth in Eastern zone to migrate to Saudi Arabia. Besides, the culture of reluctance to expose traffickers by the victims and the community in general have significant share on the involvements of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration. This shows that the community, media and the different levels of government from the kebele up to the federal government did not give attention to ensure the provision of information and awareness creation about the effect of irregular migration.

The finding revealed that there are certain challenges faced in fighting unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration. Lack of proper implementation of laws related to unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration in Ethiopia becomes a challenge of curbing irregular migration. In this line, the FDRE constitution of the 1995 and *the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants' Proclamation* no. 909/2015 stated about the seriousness of the crime of human trafficking and smuggling particularly on the minors. However, the lack of proper implementation those laws in different levels of the government have made smuggling to increase. Stockholders such as the community, the police, the woreda command posts and other security officials had not been working together. They had lacked sufficient information, dialogue in identifying the intent behind changes in the smugglers tactics, and lacked to develop effective strategies to manage it. For example, they did not developed effective communication strategies that are key step in implementing the “proclamation no. 909/2015” that became a big challenge to reduce the unaccompanied

minors’ involvement in irregular migration. There is also lack of awareness creation trainings on the effect of irregular migration. Due to lack of adequate awareness on the life situation in the host state and false information posed by their migrant friends and smugglers, the potential migrants simply were migrated knowing migrants the hardship awaiting them in destination state, they would not migrate. Moreover, the complex and dynamic tactics of the smugglers fueled the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration and human trafficking. Illegal brokers continuously change their tactics and systems of smuggling that varies through time made fighting smugglers not an easy task.

The study further indicated that the legal frameworks related to migration were ineffective in reducing the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration. Ethiopia signed in the UN Protocol to fight smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air and the Modus operandi to avert, defeat and correct trafficking in persons especially female and minors. It also signed the UN agreement against global systematized offenses. In line with those international instruments of curbing irregular migration where unaccompanied minors are part of it, Ethiopia has different domestic legal instruments of fighting such migration. The FDRE constitution of the 1995 as a supreme law of the land strictly banned human trafficking in its article 18 (2). Especially, the *Proclamation* no. 909/2015 has given much emphasis on minor migration. *It* states that, proper security, care and reintegration to the victims are important and provision of special safety, and support to the most exposed sections of the society with due attention to their age, gender and special desires is vital. Besides these legal frameworks, a national committee chaired by Deputy Prime Minister was established to curtail human trafficking that harms the minors and make cognizance on the dangers of human trafficking.

However, the study founds four main gaps on these legal frameworks of fighting human trafficking. Firstly, there is a gap in implementation of the legal



frameworks. The FDRE constitution and the “proclamation no. 909/2015” prohibited human trafficking and stressed its seriousness if it is on unaccompanied minors. However, the measures carried out over illegal brokers were not as anticipated. This was due to lack of commitment from the members of the woreda command posts and the national committee on fighting irregular migration. Though the proclamation stressed more on curative approach and little emphasis on preventive approach of fighting the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration, neither the former nor the latter were effective in achieving its objective of reducing irregular migration.

Secondly, the “proclamation no. 909/2015” in its article 35 and 39 (4) stated that, it needs a regulation for its detail elaboration to be issued by the council of ministers; however, the council of ministers did not yet issued this proclamation.

Thirdly, the top down nature fighting the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration had created a problem on the effectiveness of the legal frameworks. The federal government established a national committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister to curtail the human trafficking that harms Ethiopian youth. Nevertheless, the members’ command posts established to reduce irregular migration at the local level are fragmented with most of them nonfunctional. This is to mean that, there are no laws and effective institutions responsible to curve irregular minor migration at local level other than the laws at federal level.

Fourthly, there was awareness creation gap. Even though, the members of the command posts at the local level and the national committee’s main task is awareness creation on the risks of human trafficking, both has failed to achieve the desired level of awareness of the community in general and the unaccompanied minors in particular. As a result, minor migrants simply had misled by the false information posed by their migrant friends and

smugglers, and consequently minor migration is showing an increasing trend.

Conclusion

This study was conducted with the aim of assessing the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in Eastern Zone of Tigray National Regional State. It identified the push factors and pull factors that caused for the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration. The push factors that cause unaccompanied minors to migrate way from their home to Saudi Arabia were the unable to pass the school leaving examination, economic problem (poverty), and lack of job opportunities and devotion to the minors. Inconsistencies on the implementation of the legal system, the community’s hesitancy to expose smugglers and low attitude to local work were also additional once. The pull factors that attract the youth to Saudi Arabia were better income and job opportunities in Saudi Arabia. The more significant cause for unaccompanied minors’ involvement in irregular migration were more likely to be of push type (unemployment and poverty) or were less likely to be of pull type of factors.

It has identified that irregular migration had been financial, social, and psychological negative consequences on the unaccompanied minors. The negative economic consequences were attributed to the heavy costs of transport, repaying of loan, and dependence on remittance, whereas the social problems were difficulty of socialization to Saudi Arabia’s environment, accustom of their cultures, and face social discrimination. The psychological challenges on the unaccompanied migrants include sexual abuse, low self-esteem, health threats, feeling of stress and loneliness, rape against women, and psychological mug.

The study also found that low implementation gap of legal frameworks, stakeholders’ disintegration, lack of awareness creation trainings on the effect of irregular migration, and complex and dynamics



nature of smugglers tactics had been the challenges faced in fighting unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration.

It also indicated that “proclamation no. 909/2015” is curative not preventive to the irregular migration. It mainly focused on punishing smugglers for their criminal acts than preventing before it has happened. It is also entered in to force without its own regulation.

Recommendation

Based on the major findings of the study, the following are suggested as recommendations.

The causes for the involvement of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration have been push factors and pull factors. Thus, the Eastern Zone Administration of the Tigray National Regional State woredas along with the regional and federal government should apply legal frameworks to fight the social and economic causes for involvement of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration. Noting differently, the local government in cooperation with the regional and federal government should create job opportunity to the youth and create awareness about the effects of irregular minor migration to reduce the push and pull factors.

The community, the police, the woreda command posts and the local governments should work together to curb the effects of irregular migration on unaccompanied minors. There should be an effective measure on the smugglers.

Furthermore, “proclamation no. 909/2015” should be modified in preventive manner to reduce the involvement of the unaccompanied minors in the irregular migration. Besides, the council of ministers as per its mandate should establish a regulation for this proclamation.

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