

# **Gender based Violences and Security challenges of Women in Ethiopia: With special focus on Women under Ethnic Conflicts**

## **Abstract**

*Women and girls in general and those who are from minority group in particular are one of the most vulnerable groups to gender based violence in the courses of ethnic conflicts. This article delved the sources/causes and conditions that make gender based violence more complex among women under ethnic conflicts. Based on this aim qualitative method is employed and data was collected from relevant primary and secondary sources through interview and systematic literatures review. The social-ecological model, which enables us to figure out how a complex interplay among individual, relational/interpersonal/ community, societal factors create and perpetuate violence is used to pinpoint the sources/causes of various forms and types of gender based violence and data analyzed through content analyzes method. Inter-sectionality theory was used as analytical framework. The result depicted that regardless of progress towards minimizing violence against women and girls under ethnic conflicts, the mechanism used to minimize gender based violence are principally focused on direct violence. The result indicated that multiple vulnerabilities related to gender and marginality of women make gender based violence more complex. Finally, it is undeniable that without tackling structural frameworks and systems of governments and norms of the society that neglect and challenge the security of women, GBV cannot be eliminated and/or lessens. Thus, it is recommended that the government should assure gender responsive institutions and security sectors.*

**Key word:** Gender based violence, Ethnic conflicts, minority group, and Security challenges

## **1. Introduction**

Violence is a global phenomenon. People living both in developed and developing countries are subjected to various forms of violence (25). However, all societies of a given country are not equally vulnerable to violences (see 20; 21). Women of

minority groups under ethnic conflicts are extremely vulnerable to violence. Though males are exposed to sexual violence in conflict prone situation, women are primary targets of sexual violence and manipulation. Particularly, internally displaced women from minority groups are more vulnerable.

Regardless of several decades struggle by feminist scholars to end patriarchal violence through structural transformation, violence against women is still pervasive (26). Most importantly, in countries predominantly inhabited by traditional society minimizing violence against women has still been a daunting challenge (26).

When it comes to our country Ethiopia, akin to other 3<sup>rd</sup> world nation's violence against women specifically women under conflicts is still one of the most socio-economic and security challenges. Thus, many scholars and institutions have investigated and publishing to become part of the solution by finding out the causes and consequences of gender based violence and recommending remedies and mechanisms(tools) to address the problem.

However, as one can see the literature related to insecurity and violence of women under ethnic conflict in most cases the focus of the studies are more general and focus other dimensions of direct/ physical and psychological violence. On the other hands, some studies are studied by taking single institutions such as schools and other public institutions. The study conducted by (30); (6) and (8) can be taken as a case to see this point. The deadliest and expanded form of violence, structural violence of women under conflicts including IDPs is not given proper attention. The expanded form women insecurity and/or structural violence against women under ethnic conflict are not get emphasis. Thus, the main objective of this article was to investigate gender based violence and security challenges of women under ethnic conflicts focusing on the cause, course and justifications given to legitimize violence against women. Accordingly, the article was intended to address three topical questions:- 1) why women under conflicts have still been more insecure and became victim of gender based structural violence. 2) How

gender based violence justified and still accepted by society as normal? 3) What is the consequence and remedies needed to minimize this challenge?

## **2. Conceptualization of Violence**

Violence is defined as action which causes destruction, pain or suffering. As cited in (12), the World Health Organization, WHO, defined violence as: *The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation.*

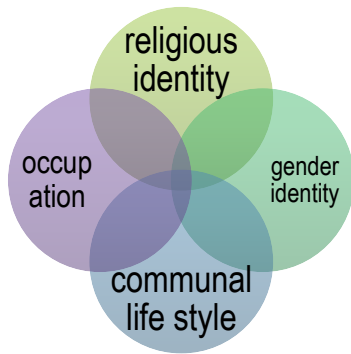
Thus, any harm to be regarded as violence, it should be intentional, and use of force /physical force/ and power. The harm of violence can be threat or actual. In the academic discourse, violence is used in reference to triple violence coined by Johan Galtung (15) physical violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Physical /direct violence that is perpetuated by a personal actor harms the receiver/victim. The harm caused by it is physical and psychological and the act of violence is intended (24). Galtung (15) defined it as the violence occurring when social structures or institutions cause harm by preventing individuals from meeting their basic needs, including institutionalized sexism. This term has also been used in action-based research by anthropologist and physician, Paul Farmer: 'structural violence is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way... The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people ... neither culture nor pure individual will is at fault; rather, historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces conspire to constrain individual agency. Structural violence is visited upon all those whose social status denies them access to the fruits of scientific and social progress' (21).

Structural/indirect violence on the other hand is understood as violence that emanates from social arrangements (21). Since it embeds on social systems, structural violence is invisible (14), covert and stable just as “tranquil water” but more harmful than physical violence (17). It is indirect in a sense that there is no personal actor that directly inflicts or harms the receiver or the victim (15). Structural violence is more harmful because it a process, not an event (16) can injure, harm, its victims ceaselessly for longer for decades or more (21). Depending on the context it occurs, structural violence harms its victims in different ways such as depriving inputs for basic need satisfaction, excluding from material food and non-material resources such as education and its effect manifest as inequality in its different forms such as economic inequality, social inequality power imbalance in favor of men (27) and injustice (20). Direct/ physical violence is an act or event; whereas structural violence is a process (15). Both direct and indirect/structural violence causes a disparity between actual and potential capacity in realizing ones desired life goal or meeting basic goals (16).

Gender based violence also known as violence against women is one form of physical violence (7;22). As cited by (7) the UN General Assembly(1993) defined gender based violence as: *Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*

As clearly stated by Rashida Manjoo (18), the UN Special Rapporteur, (2009-2015) violence against women occurs as interpersonal, institutional and structural violence. Interpersonal violence *is* one form of physical/direct violence which often occurs with a partner (22). It physical violence there is a personal actor and a receiver object of the inflicted harm. Institutional violence can be both physical and structural violence depending on its context (14).

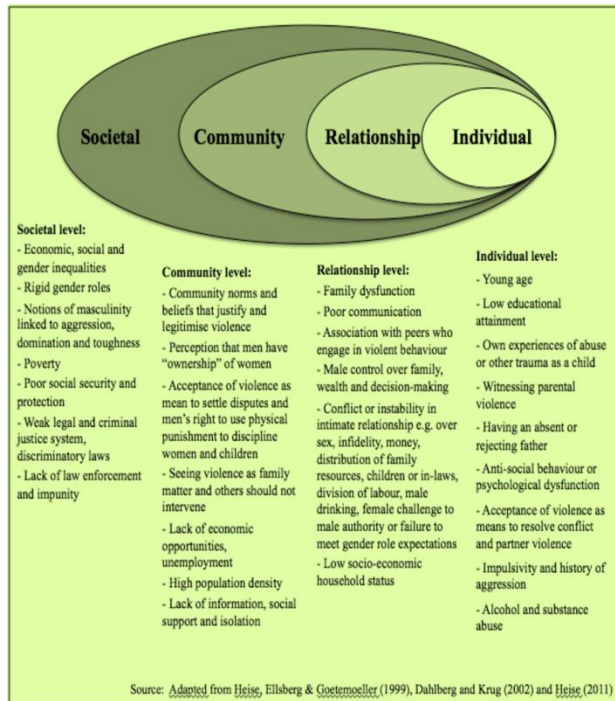
### **3. Inter-sectionality as Framework of Analysis**



**Fig . 1 Framework of Analysis**

For this study, the social-ecological model, which enables us to figure out how a complex interplay among individual, relational/ interpersonal/ community and societal factors create and perpetuate violence, is used as concept of analysis. This model is useful to pinpoint the sources/causes and mechanisms of addressing various forms/ and types of violence that occurs at different levels (12). The analysis is made from view point of feminist perspective.

The feminist perspective took patriarchy or male dominance as main source of inequality and injustice against women (22 ; 23). Patriarchy is used here to mean “greater male than female social power and status”(22). From the literature one can understand that the most harmful and that easily affects the largest numbers of women is structural violence (34 ; 27). The figure, the overlapping circles in the model illustrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level.



**Fig.2** Feminist perspective

### 3. Methods

Based on the objective, which attempted to investigate gender based violence and security challenges of women under ethnic conflicts, qualitative method was employed. Both primary and secondary data are collected from multiple sources via purposive non-probability qualitative sampling with researchers opted to use focus group discussion and in depth interview.

The participants for interviewees and focus group discussions were selected from IDPs displaced from Somalia regional state during 2018 conflict and relocated in Burayu. The focus group participants were women those are victims of the conflict and some men those have eye witness of the attack. Moreover, key informants are also taken from victims of other conflicts.

This research is exceedingly based on desk review from dozens of journal articles, books, and conference papers produced by various scholars are used as well as the relevant issues are reviewed and analyzed from proverbs, oral songs and every day languages that reflects to undermine/ subordinates women. Finally, content analyzes and text analysis is used to interpret and analyze data.

#### **4. Discussion and Analysis**

Various sources show that Ethnic based civil conflict accounts for roughly half of all civil conflicts around the world (34). From the various types of violence that occur at different levels like relational, community level and societal violence during conflicts, sexual violence (brutal gang rape) in ethnic conflict is one of the most brutal forms of violence against women in Ethiopia. Currently, Gender based violence/sexual violence against women under ethnic conflict is become structural violence in Ethiopia due to escalation of ethnic conflicts in various regional states of the country.

In this instance Galtung's explanation on how relational violence becomes structural violence is a good example. He stated *when a husband beats his wife, direct/physical violence. But when one million husbands persists beating million wives, it is structural violence* (14). Thus, the prevalence and dynamics of ethnic conflicts have been intensifying since the adoption of ethnic based political arrangements in 1991 that the 3 decades direct violences of women (especially minorities in each regional state) in each conflict by brutal gang let women victim of both direct and structural violence of women. So here it is pertinent to pinpoint and the source/cause, the justifications used to legitimize violence and its consequence.

#### **5. Gender Based Violences and socio-economic Challenges of Women under Ethnic Conflicts**

As it is discussed in the introductory part, Violence against women and girls throughout conflicts is global issue that the UN gives emphasis and undertaking actions. In 2008, the UN adopted the Resolution 1820, politicizing the need to protect women and girls during conflicts. "Noting that civilians account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict; those women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian

members of a community or ethnic group; and that sexual violence perpetrated in this manner may in some instances persist after the cessation of hostilities.

Gender based violence refers to the emotional, physical or sexual abuse based on the gender of the survivor/against men and women (1). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender based violence as *any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic women's sexuality, using pressure, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the survivor, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work*<sup>1</sup>. Gender-Based Violence during intra state and/ or ethnic conflicts has emerged as one of the most profound challenges, when the effects of rape used as a strategy of war demonstrate and systematically used as a weapon of war to destroy the possibility for future social integration and reconstruction (see, 4).

Women in general and internally displaced women from dispersed minority groups in particular are primary targets of sexual violence and manipulation during ethnic conflicts. Nonetheless, in countries predominantly inhabited by traditional society minimizing violence against women has still been an intimidating challenge (24).

Nonetheless, the notion of violence is used in action-based research by anthropologist and physician, Paul Farmer. According to him, structural violence is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm ways. The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Violence against women and girls is a form of discrimination prohibited by the Convention and is a violation of human rights. Conflicts exacerbate existing gender inequalities, placing women at a heightened risk of various forms of gender-based violence by both State and non-State actors. Conflict-related violence happens everywhere, such as in homes, detention facilities and camps for internally displaced women and refugees; it happens at any time. There are multiple perpetrators of conflict-related gender-based violence and these may include members of government armed forces, paramilitary groups, non-State armed groups, peacekeeping personnel and civilians. Irrespective of the character of the armed conflict, duration or actors involved, women and girls are increasingly deliberately targeted for and subjected to various forms of violence and abuse, ranging from arbitrary killings, torture and mutilation, sexual violence, forced marriage, forced prostitution and forced impregnation to forced termination of pregnancy and sterilization ( see, CEDAW, Arts. 1-3 and 5 (a)).

political and economic institutions and systems of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people. Structural violence is visited upon all those whose social status denies them access to the fruits of scientific and social progress' (21). Direct/physical violence is an act or event; whereas structural violence is a process (15). Both direct and indirect/structural violence causes a disparity between actual and potential capacity in realizing ones desired life goal or meeting basic goals (14). Gender based violence also known as violence against women is one form of physical violence (24;22). The UN General Assembly suppose it as any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life(24).

On the other hand, structural/indirect violence is understood as violence that emanates from social arrangements (8). Since it embeds on social systems, structural violence is invisible (8), covert and stable just as “tranquil water” but more harmful than physical violence (24). It is indirect in a sense that there is no personal actor that directly inflicts or harms the receiver or the victim (14). Structural violence is more harmful because it a process, not an event (15) can injure, harm, its victims ceaselessly for longer for decades or more (24). Depending on the context it occurs, structural violence harms its victims in different ways such as depriving inputs for basic need satisfaction, excluding from material resources such as food and shelter and non-material resources such as education and health services its effect manifest as economic inequality, social inequality, power imbalance in favor of men and injustice (34; 20; 16).

Various sources show that Ethnic based civil conflict accounts for roughly half of all civil conflicts around the world. Likewise, from the various types of violence that occur at different levels like relational, community level and societal violence during conflicts, sexual violence (brutal gang rape) in ethnic conflict is one of the most brutal forms of violence against women in Ethiopia. Currently, *Gender based violence/sexual violence against women under ethnic conflict becomes structural*

*violence* in Ethiopia due to escalation of ethnic conflicts in various regional states of the country though improvements are shown by the establishment of a legal and political framework.

In this instance Galtung's explanation on how relational violence becomes structural violence is a good example. He stated when a husband beats his wife; this is direct/physical violence. But when one million husbands persists beating million wives, it is structural violence (14). Thus, the prevalence and dynamics of ethnic conflicts have been intensifying since the adoption of ethnic based political arrangements in 1991 that the three decades direct violence of women (especially minorities in each regional state) in each conflict by brutal gang let women victim of both direct and structural violence. So here it is pertinent to pinpoint and the source/cause, the justifications used to legitimize violence and its consequence.

On the other hand, as one can see from the literature violence against women under ethnic conflict is not exhaustively studied. In most cases the focus of the studies are more general and their focus on the dimensions of direct/ physical and psychological violence under normal condition. The fatal and expanded form of violence of women under conflicts including IDPs is not given necessary proper attention. Thus, it is important to think that:

- Why women under inter-ethnic conflicts become more vulnerable to gender based violence?
- How gender based violence justified and still accepted by society as normal and what remedies needed to minimize this challenge?
- Why Gender Based Violence is Perpetual throughout Ethnic Conflicts?

Women under conflict face double jeopardy. The norms of most society in Ethiopia undermine women from all aspects directly or indirectly and give men the power to decide. Women including wives accept living as a subordinate to the husband as right. Since she accepts the dominant and submissive relationship as right, most wives and girls accept nearly all types of exploitation as normal. Husbands on their

part designated themselves as family head to maintain law and order and considered themselves as sole decision makers in the family affairs. Husbands with such mentality do not refrain from committing any punishment and harm against women that include physical, psychological and verbal violence. Practically, however, such acts are beyond physical violence.

With such gender based injury, there is coercion, alienation, exploitation and sexual abuse (28). When the majority of the family heads practice such violence unquestionably, it becomes a norm and the violence is norm-based structural violence. A wife who tries to resist it, on the other hand, is considered as deviant who violet the norm of her culture (28).

In this category gender violence martial conflict and disagreement with other sex partners ends up with male injury against women and girls. Its intensity varies from community to community in that in communities where sanctions to regulate partner relations, the level of violence can be low to moderate, in others with no sanction violence against women and girls found very serious (12). This violence is caused mostly by males because the norms encourage punishing against sex partner. One scholar Rico, (28) found that at least one from every ten woman are beaten by her partner and when we look at the reverse only 2 male out of 100 are attacked by his partner at international level. Male partners harm his partner with a motive of having submissive and docile sex partner. This is because most norms encourage males to do so (28). For example, some traditional men in rural Ethiopia used to say *if the woman and the fur are not beaten every week, it become useless*. Such husbands believe that disagreement and conflict between spouses should be resolved by punishment. In view of this, Ethiopian Human rights report of 2018 revealed that 34 percent of ever-married women and girls between ages 15 and 49 had experienced spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence. Depending on the severity of injury inflicted, penalties for conviction range from small fines to 15 years' imprisonment though its enforcement is debatable.

Punishment is considered as a way conflict resolution. Thus, gender based violence start at home and mostly male take it as norm. Moreover, most male have no shame to use it as weapon of conflict. That is why every conflict is grave danger for women than anybody (see, 27). Regard to this, one of the research participants in FGD (focus group discussion) from IDPs said” Though I’m IDPs that I have nothing to do, my husband usually shout at me and bit me seeking household care and food when he comeback from chewing chat. But nothing is in my hands to prepare for my family (FGDI-07).”

On the other hand, male control of decision making power and economy is another cause of gender violence against women (13). Controlling women by denying access to money and material resources also one form of gender based violence ‘Economic violence’ (13). Economic violence is violence when the abuser uses his economic capital to dominate other in pursuit of advancing his interest (23). In this sense male who in most society took control of the economic resource and decision making power at family level used that power to dominate and make their partners submissive and dependent up on him (13).

In relation to this point, one of IDP informants said "I am beaten when I talk back. He does not like such act. He always beat me to show his power over me not because of my fault. I have nothing because he controlled all things. My responsibility is preparation of food and caring children not making money ‘No money’ No bank account’ No asset’ at all. My day to day life is depended on his pocket (money) even before our displacement. When he refused to give money, I and my children could stay without food.... However, the condition is become more complicated after our displacement. The challenge and burden of displacement is more difficult for women like me because my husband lost his job and property during conflict and we left with bare hands” (FGDI-04).

Nonetheless, husband/boyfriend, in control of financial resource use to advance his interest including and keep the wife docile to him so that she may be forced to fulfill his needs even at the cost of abandoning her personal needs (13). This type

of violence relates to male dominance in which the males use the resources to dominate women to make them comply in the interest of male sex partners (12). In relation to this point, there are proverbs that encourage males to act as decision makers at any level. In simple terms, most norms and proverbs regard to male and female resource and power relation are designed to discourage women not to exercise decision making power in their family and at society at large. In this context, gender-based violence is a key social mechanism for perpetuating the subordination of women, since male hegemony power being considered the generic patrimony of men is based on resource and power control over women at home, community and in political sphere (see 23).

Concerning this, 47 year old adult woman from Key informant (KI) said “I cover almost all activities of household and working more than 18 hr/day without rest. But I haven’t the right to use any resource without the permission of my husband even for day to day consumption. My husband was very rude person that he used to assaulting me every day and I haven’t rights to decide in the issues of household. So I tried to escape from his home many times but I have nothing to stay elsewhere that I have been there by frightening homelessness. Finally, he took all the resources to his ex-wife before divorce come to the divorce process before we displaced from Somalia. Now all children are displaced and living with me (KI-03).”

As pointed out by Rico, (28), such beliefs and cultural attitudes not only stereotyped roles but also leads to mistreatment of a partners in a dominant-submissive relationship. Basically such divisive expressions are emanated from norm based belief that recognizes inequality between the sexes (12).

Societal beliefs that do not give recognition to equality of people both as individuals and groups is a sources *gender based structural violence*. People holding such beliefs usually categorized women as a group inferior to men and their claim supported by religions and norms. This is clear structural violence against women and in such relationship the two groups cannot have equal access to power, resources and other opportunities. In the recent past the concept of structural

violence has widely used to describe gender based violence by scholars to investigate how women and girls ill-treated institutionally and systematically (23).

Several studies indicate that structural violence against women is manifested in the form of unequal access to public services, resources and decision making power (9). Social structures including formal and informal institutions have a role in generating norms that excluded women from social and economic opportunities and perpetuate inequality. Such exclusion from life changing social, economic and political exclusion become a barrier for women to lead better livelihood and kept most of the rural women in particular vulnerable to various threats (18).

To put the causes of gender based violence in short, there is no single descriptive cause for gender based violence. Violence against women and girls emanated from various causes that vary depending on the cultural and situational context the violence occurs. When one thinks about how to address it understanding the source and social conditions that support and perpetuate it in its own context is essential. One thing that needs to be clear here is however, especially in structural violence the victim is not aware of living under condition of injustice and violence. This is because structural violence is invisible and the process is looks like normal, and it is stable like tranquil water. So it is pertinent to look at the factors that make violence to looks like normal.

### **What makes violence against women accepted as normal?**

Cultural violence is used to justify and to make direct or indirect violence to accepted as legitimate, normal or at least not wrong (15). John Galtung stated the notion of cultural violence understood as: ...aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence-exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) - that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.' Stars, crosses and crescents; flags, anthems and military parades; the ubiquitous portrait of the Leader; inflammatory speeches and posters all these come to mind (15).

From the above quoted definition it is clear that belief, ideology, language, and others can be used to make violence acceptable. *Cultural violence makes violence to look like as right or at least not wrong in various ways* such as by changing the moral color of the act of violence (15). To mention example related to how gender based violence is justified, genital mutilation or cutting some part some one's body by knife is normally is not only violence but also a crime that should take the perpetrator to court, but when justifying the violent act as not wrong, elders may defend the actor as "we did it because unless the infant is not mutilated, *she will act against her husband or family when she grew up*. This by implication means for the receiver of the harm, the kid/girl, no matter for whatever reason the perpetrator cuts part of her body, it is crime and crime is crime. But for supporters of genital mutilation, by changing the moral color of the criminal act into a benefit for the future husband, they make the violence as not wrong. Thus, most men see female as sexual objects that they used to fulfill their sexual desire.

Another example, modern legal system recognizes people as equal, but most religions directly or indirectly justify women and men are not equal. Both in Christianity and Islamic religions men are free to wear, but women and girls at least when they are in religious institutions to cover their hair and face in close and veil. In a world that advocates equality, religious norms encourage women and girls to be docile and submissive to male. Actually cultural violence the justifications are helpful to the perpetrator of the harm.

Ethiopia gave emphasis on empowerment, equality and protection of fundamental rights of women. Article 25 of federal constitution stipulated equality of citizen before the law. Article 35 of the constitution provides right to women and this article put more specific and detail provision of the constitutional women specific rights targeting to affirm women (35)<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Article 35 'The Rights of Women'. The federal constitution under this article gave especial emphasis for women considering historical disadvantages that harm and marginalized women. For instance, Art 35(3) states 'considering that women have

However, the constitution indeed is also limited in certain aspects. By taking article 34 (5) of the constitution, which empowers customary law in resolving family issues, is still fraught with limitations (see, 35). Hence it overly empowers religious and customary laws as arbiters of family matters such as divorce (including division of resource between divorced spouses) and inheritance, it is difficult to eliminate past traditional discernment from community.

Article 34 (5) clearly put that *the Constitution shall not preclude the adjudication of disputes relating to personal and family laws in accordance with religious or customary laws, with the consent of the parties to the dispute. Particulars shall be determined by law* (35).

Nonetheless, it is our lived experiences that customary laws could seriously disadvantage women in many respects. Since they have not been created in consultation with women they are subordination tool. They consider women as minor/ subordinate and their custodians are elders and patriarchal men. In most of the customary laws, women are marginalized to the extent that they are prevented from attending customary proceedings, even in cases where they are parties to the litigation. They have no say as regards the application of custom in questions of justice that affect their lives, because customarily women are required to be represented by male members of their families: father, brother, and sometimes uncles (see, 5). This in turn challenging gender equality and adversely affecting the interest and right of women as it tends to be patriarchal in nature. Given the contribution of traditional and religious laws in peace building and conflict

---

traditionally been viewed with inferiority and are discriminated against, they have the right to the benefit of affirmative actions' undertaken for the purpose of introducing corrective changes to such heritage. The aim of such measures is to ensure that special attention is given to enabling women to participate and compete equally with men in the political, economic and social fields both within public and private organizations' and Art 35(4) states 'The State has the duty to guarantee the right of women to be free from the influence of harmful customary practices. All laws, stereotyped ideas and customs which oppress women or otherwise adversely affect their physical and mental well-being are prohibited.

resolution, it deemed desirable to raise critical concern regarding the societal and cultural construction/attitude regarding gender equality in Ethiopia (3).

Of course Ethiopia is working to improve the security conditions by designing intervention policies and strategies to eradicate socially constructed subordinating attitudes and empower women economically so as to alter women's social status and traditional attitudes (mostly in rural areas) but long-drawn-out ethnic conflicts which followed by proliferation of non-formal ethnic based armed groups' including customary regulation and attitudes are still security challenges of women and girls.

## **6. Displacement, Gender Based Violence and Security Challenges of Women under Ethnic Conflicts**

In fact, pre-existing socially constructed gender norms, low economic status, powerlessness (political) and prevalence of gender based violence let women to be more vulnerable. Gloomily, incidence of ethnic conflicts and conflict induced-displacements multiplied their vulnerability.

Gender based violence in armed conflict is one of the most brutal forms of violence against women. It is more specifically seen as means for the perpetrators to harm the enemy. It has been used in conflicts in the twentieth century and is a phenomenon having long-term consequences. Gender-based violence is used by the perpetrators for a very precise aim. *The will is to break the enemy's spirit.*

Though its prevalence and intensity vary noticeably across and within conflicts, many women around the World are victim of sexual violence. For instance, about 500,000 women were raped during the Rwandan genocide within 4 months in 1994 (see 20). Similarly, during the Bosnian war at least 50,000 women were victim of sexual violence of conflict from 1992 to 1995 and protracted civil war from 1991 to 2002 in Sierra Leonean let 250,000 women victim of sexual violence. Also 200,000 were raped during the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971 and 400,000 in a single year of the conflict in Eastern Congo (20).

When it comes to Ethiopian context, sexual violence has become nothing new as discussed above. Following the adoption of ethnic federalism, inter-ethnic disagreements concerning boundaries, identities, resources, powers, self-rule and the quest for region...etc have become the main sources of ethnic conflicts, internal displacements and challenges of peace and security in Ethiopia. People in many regional states have continued to suffer due to internal conflicts though the interlinked triggers of climate change has forced people to flee their homes in different regional states of Ethiopia. Since 2018 its incidence is intensified than ever. Following this, insecurity and sexual violence in various conflicts by brutal gang become challenges of women.

The research participants during the focus group discussions expressed that the process of displacement was too challengeable and heartbreaking particularly for women. Some research participants told that escaping the Special force of Somali that suddenly came to their home to attack them was very difficult for women particularly for *pregnant and women with infants*. In this instance one of the women from the group shared what she confronted during the conflict and how lack of peace and stability difficult particularly for women with under age children. When explaining the situation, one informant said: I asked my neighbor from Somali ethnic group to obscure me and my children by locking the door of my home on us and she did that. As soon as, the militias came and asked her where we were and she responded "I don't know where they are and their door is locked since yesterday. They are not here please go away." Immediately my youngest child cried loudly in the home! Then they severely bitten my neighbor (she is ethnically Somali) and they broke down my home, harassed and bitten me and forcibly took me and my family to the collective camp.

Furthermore, participants of the discussions revealed that the act of killing, rape or sexual violence during ethnic conflicts is not an isolated peculiar deed. It is extremely purposive and aimed not only at attacking an individual woman but also at the community's sense honor.

Using Gender based violence as weapon of war is another cause for intensification of violence (23). For instance, after the outbreak of full scale war in November 2020 following the Tigrians forces opened fire on Ethiopian National defense stationed in Tigray region of Ethiopia, Gender Based Violence was used as instrument of war in Tigray, Afar and Amhara by parties involved in the war (2). In relation to this point, the report released in February, 2022 of UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicted that from July 2021 onwards, in and around Chenna, a village in North Gondar, Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia, the Tigrigna forces raped dozens of women and girls under 18. Explaining its severity is too difficult. For instance, looking one victim's interview by OCHA is important to see how conflict particularly ethnic conflict is grave danger for women and girls and how Women and girls are exposed for war revenge. One of the interviews of OCHA said that she was at home with her mother and grandmother when young men with rifles came to their home. One of them wore military clothes and the others wore civilian clothes. They spoke a mix of Tigrinya and some Amharic. The abusers said: *Our families were raped and now it is our turn to rape you.* 'They raped me and my mother. She is now very depressed and desperate.' We don't speak about what happened; it is impossible! (See, 36)

Nonetheless, the protracted conflict started in 2020 in north Ethiopia, sexual violence was accompanied by shocking levels of brutality, including beatings, death threats, and ethnic slurs. Fourteen of the 30 survivors interviewed by Amnesty International indicated that they were gang-raped by multiple Tigrayan fighters, and some were raped in front of their children. Seven of the survivors were girls under the age of 18.

On the other hand, the reports of Human Rights Watch indicated that there were reports of sexual violence in areas controlled by armed forces, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, and torture, often accompanied by killings of, beatings, and degrading, ethnic-based slurs.

Currently, ethnic conflict is become the main cause of women insecurity and gender based violence in Ethiopia. Because attackers used it as war weapon to revenge the opposing conflict party. The purpose gender based violence in conflict is mostly a part of psychological warfare rather than sexual gratification.

### **What are the impacts of violence against women during conflict?**

The consequence of violence against women is manifested in different forms such inequality, injustice and unequal life chance. Further, direct consequences include physical, psychological violence and structural inequality. Since violence in its all forms inhibits victims from using their full potential, they will achieve in all aspect of life lower than what they could do to meet their basic needs or life goals (Galtung, 1969). As pointed out by Galtung (14) when violence influenced /inflicted “that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations”. In this regard, women who deprived from material and non-material resources such as education and medical services cannot work in her full potential to support herself and her facility. Consequently, family members especially children who lack properly support from the mother drop out from school to search means of survival in their own right. Women often become trapped in poverty with limited options to exit and this exacerbates the trauma that many have already faced (17).

The other grave consequence of Gender based violence is related to health problem Women and girls who experienced gender based violence have a high risk of exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted disease and unwanted pregnancy. As indicated in a report by the World Health Organization, WHO (2014) women who had been subjected to sexual harassment by intimate partner experienced a 16% chance of bearing low weight baby and more than twice chance of committing induced abortion and 4.5-fold increased risk of suicide attempts when compared with women free from violence (17; 33). When women as mother and wife with great responsibility in support of the family dies, to imagine how hard life will be to the entire family. This phenomenon comes with disastrous

long-lasting physical and psychological consequences for victims, their families, and their communities (6).

Gender based structural violence is shown up in the form of inequality in access essential resources and basic needs. Most importantly in patriarchal systems that discriminate against women and girls, they could not participate in political activities such as in election and electing women leaders (19). Without active participation of women in politics the socio-economic development of the society cannot be effective (19).

Due to lack of effective women participation development the 2000 UN Millennium development goal (MDGs, Its success was highly dependable on improving the condition of women in UN member state. Regardless of some success in achieving some of the goals member countries who failed to make women and girls fully participate in several development sectors especially in health education and in family and community affairs, failed to achieve it (33).

At the same time it is a great lesson for policy makers and development agents to learn that development by excluding half of the people of the country's people is unthinkable.

Depending on the nature of the violence experienced by women, gender based violence has several consequences. Survivors interviewed by Amnesty International have suffered physical and mental trauma resulting in depression, insomnia, anxiety, and other forms of emotional distress, often made worse by the reaction of their husbands and families. Several women said that their husbands had left them and others said that they feel unable to tell their husbands and/or their families about having been raped. Some said they could no longer live in their villages because of the stigma.

The sexual violence documented by Amnesty International indicates shocking levels of brutality, including beatings, death threats, and ethnic slurs. Fourteen of the 30 women and girls interviewed by Amnesty International in and around

Chenna were raped by multiple perpetrators, two in front of their children. Seven are below 18 two as young as 14. Doctors who provided medical care to rape survivors told Amnesty International that two survivors had to be treated for lacerations caused by foreign objects inserted into their genitals, seemingly rifle bayonets (2).

For example whenever they came, I had to cook for them and once some of them even slept in our compound. I live with my parents and my children but my children had left with my brother. My husband was a soldier but was killed a month earlier in the war in Tigray. On 2 September (Nahassie 27) four of them came; one was called colonel by the other three. He raped me first, while the others were outside. After he left the other three raped me one by one. After they left I went to free my parents who had been locked up in a separate room in our compound by the Tigrayan fighters. My father told me that when he asked them to leave me alone they had kicked him.

Gender based violence against women and girls take place in different contexts and its source and causes vary. Gender based violence be it direct or structural violence equally harmful the victim. To address the problem, in Ethiopia, various efforts ranging from establishing institution and setting policies like affirmative action and gender mainstreaming are good initiatives. However, when compared with its magnitude, gender based violence is still remains intact. It needs more attention from government and non-government organization who have strived to minimize and eradicate violence against women and girls. Focusing on structures and systems including formal and informal law and norms and policies will helps to lessen the problem.

## **Conclusion & Recommendation**

Structural violence against women and girls take place in different contexts and its source and causes vary. Gender based violence be it direct or structural violence is equally harmful to the victim. In cognizant of the problem, in Ethiopia, various

efforts ranging from establishing institution and setting policies like affirmative action and gender mainstreaming are good initiatives. However, when compared with its magnitude, gender based violence is still remains intact. One of the reasons is that the focus of some government and non-government organization who have strived to minimize and eradicate violence against women and girls is on direct violence. Focusing on structures and systems including formal and informal norms and policies that support, structural violence, the deadliest and most harmful form of violence, is better than giving attention to direct violence. Focusing on direct violence cannot cure the pathology. Curing the real pathology requires threatening the roots and real sources of the pathology.

Thus, based on our findings we have identified some recommendations for concerned bodies to improve the security conditions of the women. The government should design and implement intervention policies to eradicate the socially constructed subordinating attitudes and empowerment women economically so as to alter women's social status.

---

### References

1. Ali, A. F. (2010). *War and armed conflict: Threat to African women's human security. The gender imperative: Human security Vs. State security*, eds. Betty A. Reardon Asha Hans, London, Routledge.
2. Amnesty International report (2022). Retrived from <https://www.amnesty.org> on 21/03/2023.
3. Assefa, T. (2021). A Review of Constitutional and Policy Provisions for Women empowerment in Ethiopia. *Academia Letters, Article 1184*. <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL1184>.
4. Augustine, E. (2013). *Sexual and gender-based violence in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: The region of South Kivu, Field survey*. Unpublished paper.
5. Ayalew, G. (2012). *Customary laws in Ethiopia: A need for better recognition?* Working paper research partnership programme, Danish institute for human rights (DIHR). December 2012. Aavailable in: [www.humanrights.dk](http://www.humanrights.dk)

- Basazin, A., & Mamo, T. (2021). Prevalence and associated factors of gender based violence among Baso high school female students. *Reproductive Health* .
- Breines, I., Connell, R., & Eide, I. (2000). *Male roles, masculinities and violence; A culture of peace perspective*. Paris : UNESCO.
- Christine Kelly 1\*, D. K. (2021). 'Doing' or 'using' intersectionality? Opportunities and challenges in incorporating intersectionality into knowledge translation theory and practice. *International Journal for Equity in Health* , 1-7.
- CLEMPSON, R. (2012). *The Primacy of Structural Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa*.
- Cordon, M., Fatu Drame, Erica Schmidt, & Stepp, H. (2018). *Systematic Literature Review of Gender Based Violence in Ethiopia*. Social Impact .
- Cruz, A., & Klinger, S. (2011). *Gender-based violence in the world of work: Overview and selected annotated bibliography*. International Labour Organization.
- Etienne, Krug, Linda, Dahlberg, James, Mercy, et al. (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Fawole, O. I. ( 2008 ). ECONOMIC VIOLENCE TO WOMEN AND GIRLS Is It Receiving the Necessary Attention? *TRAUMA, VIOLENCE, & ABUSE, Vol. 9, No. 3*, 167-177.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 6, No. 3*, 167-191.
- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 27, No. 3* , 291-305.
- Khan, A. a. ( 2 0 1 4 ). Structural Violence: A Tale of Three Women from Marginalized Communities in Bangladesh. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 21, 54 7 -5 5 6.
- Manjoo, R. (2011). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences*,. United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council, Seventeenth session/ A/HRC/17/26.
- Manjoo, R., & McRaith, C. (2010). Gender-Based Violence and Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Areas. *Cornell International Law Journal Vol. 44*, 1-30.
- Mazurana, D., & McKay<sup>1</sup>, S. (2007). WOMEN, GIRLS , AND S TRUCTURAL V IOLENCE : A GLOBAL A NALYSIS. In Christie, Wagner, & (. & Winter, *Peace, Conflict, and Vio-ence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*. (pp. 1-15). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Mehta, L. (2016). Why Invisible Power and Structural Violence Persist in the Water Domain. *IDS Bulletin Vol. 47 No. 5 'Power, Poverty and Inequality'*, 31-42.
- Milaney, K., Lockerbie, S. L., Fang, & X., & Ramage, & K. (2019). The role of structural violence in family homelessness. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*.
- Montesanti, S. R. (2015). The role of structural and interpersonal violence in the lives of women: a conceptual shift in prevention of gender-based violence. *Montesanti BMC Women's Health, 15:93*, 1-3.
- Mukherjee, J., Barry, D., Satti, H., Raymonville, M., Marsh, S., & Smith-Fawzi, M. K. (2011). Structural Violence: A Barrier to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals for Women. *JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S HEALTH Volume 20, Number 4, DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2010.2375*, 593-597.
- Nakamura, Y. (2017). *Structural Violence and Evil as a Social Action, PhD dissertation i. Keio University*.

- Nash, C. J. (2020). Patriarchy. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography (Second Edition)*.
- ODA. (2015). *Achievements and Challenges in the Implementation of the MDGs*.
- Rakovec-Felser, Z. (2014). Domestic Violence and Abuse in Intimate Relationship from Public Health Perspective. *Health Psychol Res. Nov 6; 2(3):*.
- Rico, N. (1997). *GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE*. SERIE MUJER Y DESARROLLO WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT.
- Sang. (2018). Gender, ethnicity and feminism: An intersectional analysis of the lived experiences feministacademic women in UK Higher Education'. *Journal of Gender Studies* , vol. 27, no. 2,, 192-206.
- Tantu, T., Wolka, Sintayehu, Gunta3, M., Teshome, M., Mohammed, H., et al. (2020). Prevalence and determinants of gender-based violence among high school female students in Wolaita Sodo, Ethiopia: an institutionally based cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health, 20:*.
- Taramundi, D. M. (2007). CHAPTER 8 Minorities-within-Minorities Frameworks,Intersectionality and Human Rights: Overlapping Concerns or Ships Passing in the Night? In D. M. Taramundi, *Ethno-Cultural Diversity and Human Rights* (pp. 256–285). Brill | Nijhoff.
- UNFPA. (2022). *Violence Against Women – UNFPA’s Work to Make Gender-Based Violence a Thing of the Past*. Friends of UNFP.
- UNO. (2015). *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*. New York: United Nations .
- Zakrisson, T. L., Valde’s, D. M., & Muntaner, C. (2019). Social Violence,Structural Violence,Hate, and the Trauma Surgeon. *International Journal of Health Services Vol. 49(*, 665–68.
-