Assessing the Negative Stereotypes and Marginalization of Craft Worker's in North Gonder, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is assessing effect of negative stereotypes and marginalization on craft workers living in North Gonder. The study has been carried out in six purposely selected villages in north Gonder. A cross sectional qualitative method was employed (in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion) involving a total of 44 participants 30 key informant, and 4 FGD comprising 10 individuals in each group through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Accordingly, the causes for marginalization of craft workers are mainly socio-cultural constructions retained in negative stereotypes, and evileye ideology stemmed from the perception of the non-craft worker society. Generally, those Craft-workers historically in Ethiopian history marginalized by those non craft workers in many ways such as, restriction in many social institutions, and social segregation. Currently, some types of marginalization are declining and hence there is spatial integration and intermarriage. Finally it is recommended that, interventions are needed like public and religious teaching to change the belief of the society, promoting 'those indigenous hand crafts workers' and the government design policy related to marginalized negative stereotypes of craft workers and programs to teach the society about equality.

Keywords: *Marginalization, Segregation, Craft worker, Potter, Tanner, negative stereotype.*

1.1 Introduction

Nowadays, federalism recommended as a good model to manage and govern ethnic pluralism in Ethiopia. It is conceived as good instrument that protects the rights of minority groups and promotes social security and state integration (Vander Beken, 2013). Social marginalization is multi-layered concept. It is "being outside the main stream of productive activity and/ or social reproductive activity" (Kagan et. al, 2005).

Handcraft working has a long history in producing the most vital utilities associated with the daily lives of both urban and rural communities in Ethiopia (Mulu, 2007). Despite this Craft working is

identified as dishonored occupation and workers are marginalized (Damtew, 2000). Ethiopian

Human Rights Council, (2009) noted in Ethiopia not only ethnic minorities (like *Wayto* and *Felasha* in Amhara, *Waata* in Oromia, *Manjo* and *Manna* in Kefa, and *Fuga* in Yem) but also occupational minorities of craft workers are exposed to marginalization due to their occupation. Admas (2000) pointed marginalization is the most dangerous form of oppression, people expelled from useful participation in social life and subjected to severe material deprivation. Pankhurst (2001) stated that marginalization is expressed in negative stereotyping, polluting and mythological justifications. Additionally, Reminick (1978) and Finneran, (2003) explained that craft workers are associated with evil eye that the group and the occupation are looked down. Freeman and Pankhurst (2003) stated that manifestations of marginalization are restrictions on exchanges, social interactions and consumptions of food and drink; segregation in burial; and beliefs about craft workers' evil spirit powers. Thus, craft workers usually occupy the lower status of the social hierarchy.

According to Hoben also Amhara region divided the stratification of the society in to three social categories and craft workers were assigned in the lowest status of the community. Due to this they are subordinated by the community Hoben, (1970). The relationship between craft workers and the community is characterized by social distance and negative characterization. Thus includes, historical negative stereotype, bias, and discrimination are important in conceptualizing the pattern of relationships Epple Susanne, (2018); Lewis, (1970) and Akalework, (2014).

In Ethiopia, the present and previous governments have made many efforts to establish equality and integration of excluded groups. Currently, churches run numerous awareness-raising programmes and some national and international NGOs and activist groups are also active in the country (Freeman and Pankhurst 2001). But, as many studies show, marginalization continues to exist. According to Epple Susanne (2018) the categorization that have been used before have focused on either the occupational groups or the majority society. It is impossible to make correlations between categories based on either the type of craft or the form of the majority society. It is illogical to correlate craftwork with Marginalization based on the occupation they carry out. Because, different farmers produce craftworks like house-building, thatching and rope-making.

The post-1991 period witnessed the introduction of an unprecedented political structure in the modern history of Ethiopia. The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which came into force in 1995, is built on the principle of accommodating diversity and the protection of the rights of the minority groups (FDRE constitution, 1995). As a matter of fact, the new constitution is adopted after the down fall of the dictatorial government of Derg, and consists of various human rights provisions and powers and benefits shared with regional states, but the federal constitution is not without drawbacks in its implementation (Abbay, 2009; Fiseha, 2007; Habtu, 2004; cited in Gebre slassie, 2016). The drastic changes that occurred in Ethiopia during the twentieth century have changed the livelihoods of minority groups consisting of hunters and craft workers. Some have given up their conventional subsistence activities, hunting or making crafts, and have begun farming.The relationships of these minorities with neighboring majority groups are also changing (Gamst, 1979).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The studies of minority groups have been conducted from various perspectives, including approaches that focus on social structures such as castes and hierarchies, symbolic approaches that

focus on pollution and fertility, and approaches that focus on patron-client relationships, and so on (Pankhurst, 1999). Most of these studies are based on the dominant perspective of the majority group, the farmers, and disregard the viewpoint of the minorities. Since the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power, the federal government has followed a policy of ethnic federalism. The new Constitution, enacted in 1994, acknowledges that all nations, nationalities, and peoples have an unconditional right to self-determination, including a right to secession. Article 39 defines the complex concept of nation, nationality and people as a group of people who have, or share in large measure, a common culture or similar customs, a mutually intelligible language, a belief in a common or related identity and a common psychological make up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory. Based on this definition, affirmative measures for minority nationalities and peoples are introduced. The purpose of this affirmative action is to correct imbalance among the ethnic groups in the local administration.

However, the combination of the federal system and the right to self-determination has created new political units, with their own political and cultural autonomy, which have caused problems and conflicts regarding the language used for education and administration in border areas. Intentionally or not, this provision further strengthens ethnicity as a political identity and as a vessel for "democratic rights" (Abbink, 1997: 1 72-173). Marginalization and disparity among various ethnic groups in a particular nation might have impact on the development and competition in diverse aspects, such as cultural, linguistic, political, economic, educational, historic and social as well. In North Gonder of Ethiopia the negatives stereotypes of craft workers or occupational groups have not been studied from different perspectives in previous literatures. The *Falasha* and *Negede Wayto*, have been only studied from sociological perspectives. Also, this study is conducted from the perspective of the non-craft community's belief and ideology.

2.1 Literature Review

Moreover, Tamiru (2017) pointed out that earlier studies about craft workers were conducted and interpreted at national and regional level. But marginalization is multi-dimensional and dynamic it should be studied contextually in smallest administration unit like kebele or village level. Thus, this study is conducted at the smallest unit in village level. However, my study area conducted on assessing on six districts of North Gonder Zone of Amhara regional states. North Gondar, nowadays, is one of the zonal administrations of the Amhara Regional State bordered by Central Gondar in the south, Tekezze River in the north, Waghimra Zone in the east and Central Gondar zone in the west. However, in this zone of the peoples living here have uniform language, culture, communalities and values. This zone is known in different craft work products but craft workers are socially, religiously and culturally subjected to marginalization. Specifically, in the town of Dabat, Debark, Beyeda, Adiarkay, Janamora, Dima/Mitsbrey and Telamet there are known six districts of craft workers mainly North Gonder Zone.

There are manifestations of negative stereotype of craft worker marginalization in spatial, social and cultural scopes in these six North Zonal Administration. Thus, study is conducted in North Gonder zone in general, Dabat, Debark, Beyeda, Adiarkay, Janamora and Dima/Mitsbrey in specific. The reason to select these zones is, the researcher was observing the separate villages of craft workers in my localities for long period of time. In addition, within this six zonal administrative areas, craft workers are identified and called by derogatory and segregator names and honor humiliating titles. For instance, the tanners as '*faqi*' 'ፋቂ', the potters as '*budda*' 'ቡዳ', and weavers as '*qutite betashe*' 'ቁጢት-በጣሽ'. These terms are generally used to mention the

hierarchically lower status of craft workers while implicitly reinforcing the 'dominant' society's sense of superiority. As a result, the researcher has adequate knowledge and experience about social negative stereotypes and marginalization of craft workers.

This study assessing on the negatives stereotypical categorization of craft workers as marginalized according to the way that they are stereotyped by the majority. Thus, this research worried to give full indication on the recent condition of craft workers in line with the forms of cultural, religious social and institutional marginalization of the craft-workers in North Gonder zone.

During the study the researcher faced some short comes; such as shortage of financial resources, shortage of available reference materials, lack of supplementary research works in the study area, shortages of transportation services and the absence of internet technology were some of the limitations faced the researcher. However, these limitations happened, the researcher was tried to overcome it and conducted the study.

3.1 Research Method

Design of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of negative stereotypes and marginalization. However, the research employed descriptive research design due to the fact that it is appropriate to come across the prevailing social negative stereotypes of handcraft workers that characterized to marginalize in major North Gonder zone city states. This North Gonder zone covers the areas of Dabat, Debark, Beyeda, Adiarkay, Janamora, Dima/Mitsbrey and Telamet. The data for this knowledge construction contained the key participants of the study (craft workers), the nearby community leaders, religious and elderly people who could give authentic information about the issue under investigation.

The Research Method

This study utilized mixed method approach through collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data .The researcher initially used quantitative method through survey questionnaires and used semi-structured interviews to substantiate the quantitative data. The reason to use mixed methods approach for this study is such methods are advantageous to examine the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives and allow dipper dimensions to emerge (Cohen, 2007; Creswell, 2003:2012).

This study was conducted in North Gonder administrative zone in Amhara Regional State. North Gonder, where Dabat, Debark, Beyeda, Adiarkay, Janamora, Dima/Mitsbrey and Telamet Woreda is found, is one of the administrative zones of Amhara regional state situated to the north of Addis Ababa. Economically, the majorities are sedentary agriculturalists, who largely depend on cereal farming which is practiced by ox-drawn plough. Many people in the town are engaged in small scale trade.

Subjects of the study

The primary study subjects of this study are craft workers engaged in pot making and tanning who are living in the this north Gonder zone distinct wereda of Dabat, Debark, Beyeda, Adiarkay, Janamora, Dima/Mitsbrey and Telamet found in the out skirt of the town. Though there are craft workers who live dispersed in different kebeles in this Woreda due to financial and other constraints the study carried in this zone and wereda of craft workers were selected purposefully.

Sample and Sampling procedure

For this research purposive sampling technique was used in order to select 44 individuals from the six weredas astotal sample size. Hence, 30 individuals were selected for in-depth interview based on their willingness and seniority, both from craft workers and non- craft individuals who can provide rich information from their life experiences about the existing social marginalization of tanners, weavers and potters.

The researcher also conducted 4 FGDs constituting 10 individuals in each group to obtain evidence on their social relations, their view about themselves, attitude towards the non-craft people, causes of marginalization, andforms of their marginalization.

Data Collection tools

In order to meet the objective and to answer the research questions the researcher used different qualitative data collection tools which enable to obtain rich information about the issue under investigation. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observation were employed.

Method of Data Analysis

To carry out this research, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis on the basis of basic questions.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The data which is gathered through questionnaire is analyses by using quantitative data analysis. The quantitative data collected through questionnaire is analyses by using tables, frequency and percentage.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The data obtained through interview was analyses qualitatively. The qualitative data is first organized into meaningful information and the data is described both as expressed by interviewees and as understood by the researcher.

The study is started after fully discussed with the zone and woreda administrations during the sensitization and mobilization trip on the issue of study and reached on consensus that the data or information from the study is available for the development of the woreda. The respondents are asked for verbal consent to participate in the study.

4.1 Results and Findings

This chapter presents the description of the sample population, analysis and interpretation of the data based on the information obtained through the questionnaires and Interviews. It consists of two parts, the first part concerned with the description of respondent's characteristics whereas; the second part deals with the analysis and interpretation of the main data. The purpose of this data was aimed to explore the effects of negative stereotypes and marginalization in Northe Gonder areas. To this end, the investigator developed data gathering tools that integrate various aspects of social marginalization of North Gonder Zone in different districts. The causes of craft workers negative stereotypes are social constructions retained in marginalization and traditional negative ideology and lower social status. They were marginalized in the forms of restriction from social associations, restriction in intermarriage and spatial segregation. Thus, efforts were made to investigate the cause and forms of marginalization by incorporating such components.

Causes of Craft Workers Marginalization

Associating Craft Workers with Evil Eye

People in Amhara administrational areas in general and in the North Gonder zone in particular, associate Evil Eye with potters and every one believed that potters possess the evil spirit through inherence. Eye contact is believed to be essential for the '*buda*' people to attack the potential victim. In other words, the evil eye attack is thought to be accomplished by eye gaze. Though eye gaze is believed to be essential, every eye contact with the '*buda*' people does not mean an attack. The interviewed non-craft workers reported that the society thought that '*buda'* people conceal their human identity while digging the grave. In addition, it is believed that entrails of a person died of evil eye attack is 'eaten' by the '*buda'* people**.**

The above explanation assumes the alleged different character they possess. In addition the notion of '*buda'* affects personal relations.

Due to the fear of evil eye attack the society maintains physical distance and thus craft workers social relationships are affected consistent with Finneran, N. (2003). Besides, FGD participants of the craft workers expressed that, they are stereotyped *as jib galabi /hyena rider /* because it is assumed that '*buda'* people ride hyena to reach the grave of the deceased. This seems a symbolic attachment with a negatively perceived animal, hyena. In the study area hyena is considered as something having magical force, and its name is employed to refer negative trait.

Generally, the finding revealed that, the non-craft society discourages interpersonal relations and physical contact with craft workers who are believed to have evil spirit. Sometimes, being conscious of such fear, the 'buda people' prefer alienation similar with Mulu, (2007) and Reminick (1978). Moreover, this study asserted that evil spirit is believed to be inherited. And thus, these beliefs the major cause of marriage restriction with craft workers.

Negative Stereotyping

There are different negative characterizations and assumptions that are employed by non-craft people in an attempt to rationalize the marginalization of craft workers. One non-craft people informants disclosed that, craft workers particularly potters are characterized as wasteful and extravagant. They are considered as unable to save their money and are also perceived as thoughtless about their future life.

FGD participant from non-craft people expressed that potters particularly perceived to have impure descent and are referred to as *atintegodelo* ('impartial bone') and also/*tilayelesh*/have no grace/ or *tilakelal*/light grace/. Whatthe society called *tila* is not related with one's clothing or physical structure nor to shadow or umbrella. The society thinks that craft workers are not graceful no matter how fat or tall and well-dressed.

Moreover, FGD discussants of tanners described that the negative characterization is associated with the hide they are working with. Due to the nature of their traditional hide work tanners may have bad sniff and they are unclean. This perception of impurity is the major factor for the marginalization of tanners which is consistent with Epple Susanne (2018).

The association with 'impurity' keeps tanners aside mainly in the dimensions of physical contact and commensality as similar with Freeman and Pankhurst (2003).Since, tanning is carried out with traditional methods tanners mainly at their work place, have sniff. Hence, I have observed their work place while they work in my field stay.

Tanners are also said to have different facial feature and physical structure. In contrary to this, in actual cases there is no any clearly distinguished physical feature which identifies such people as far as the researcher's field work experience is concerned. Outsider can't notice and identify the tanners from the non-craft people simply by looking the color and physical structure, unless they see them practicing or selling their crafts. Therefore, from the obtained data the characterizations mentioned above are perhaps allegations to rationalize exclusion or restriction of craft workers participation and involvement in socio-cultural affairs.

Forms of Marginalization

Restriction in Social Associations

There are different voluntary associations established and utilized on a reciprocal basis to accomplish different goals in the surrounding community. From this *Mahiber* the most predominant religious oriented association people gather in an honor of a certain Saint in the Orthodox religion once in a month to eat, and drink.

Many people do not like to eat and drink in tanner's house due to their perception of impurity. Though tanners were invited, non-craft workers do not accept the reciprocal invitation. Therefore, commensality was restrictive especially for tanners and they are still facing difficulties to participate in feast oriented associations due to the perception that connects tanners with impurity based on the evidence from the data obtained. And craft workers were not allowed to participate in associations organized among the non-craft people consistent with Freeman and Pankhurst (2003).

Restriction of potters from religious association is due to evil eye ideology. As a result of the fear of evil eye attack the society excluded potters from the participation of different religious feast associations. In the course of time certain changes have come to be seen; unlike tanners potters now a day are joining to different *Mahiber*s. Generally from the findings obtained the causes of craft workers restriction from association are ideology of evil eye and impurity

Marriage Restriction

Marriage with craft workers is considered as disgraceful. Denial of intermarriage with the *chewa* has been a salient variable perpetuating low status of craft workers. All the interviewed non-craft workers discussed that the community considers intermarriage with craft workers as 'pollutant'. This is because of the categorization as *chewa* (commoners) and *ejeseri (*craft workers).

One elder from non-craft people informant in line with this explained as:

> *"Craft workers are considered as atintegodelo and have impure descent. Marriage with them is not common in this Wordeda. When one wants to marry a girl the first thing that comes to non-craft workers mind is the girl or boy from the chewa or balabat or not. This is a trend from the past and if that person is chewa one can engage unless no one can engage with craft workers."*

In addition, FGD discussants of craft workers revealed that inter marriage with non- craft peoples is difficult for us. The strict norm in this Woreda is marriage, it is still forbidden to marry *chewa* from craft workers.

One potter disclosed his life experience regarding this situation as follows:

> *"In one time, I fell in love with one girl form the chewa family and we spent two years as friends in a good relationship. After two years her parents heard that she is going to marry a potter. Finally they quarrel with her and she is forced to stop the relationship with me. Thus, we broke our relationship."*

The finding of the study also showed that the ideological explanations, craft workers' forced endogamous nature of marriage largely arises from the non-craft workers' avoidance. Thus, evil eye nature and 'impurity' that are maintained through negative characterizations are the main reasons for marriage restriction with craft workers.

The research revealed that marriage restriction initially implies biological segregation by preserving ascribed status. Functionally, the biological exclusion limits and affects other aspects of relation. Thus, forced endogamy in Debark has been initial variable employed by the 'dominant' society to keep craft workers aside this is consistent with (Damtew, 2000; Pankhurst, 2003).

Moreover, FGD held among non-craft people pointed out unlike the past, some youngsters began to break the tradition that resulted from culture, now a day intermarriage regarding potters there are changes. The restriction to inter- marriage for young educated person is illogical. That is to say, educated adolescent males from the higher status, the so-called *chewa* group marry wives from potters. But the participants justifiedmarriage with tanners is extremely restricted still now.

5.1 Conclusion

The study was designed to explore the negative stereotypes effects of marginalization. Therefore, based on analysis and discussion regarding the social aspect of marginalization that characterizes craft-workers, the following conclusions have been made;

The social aspects have been the means of exclusion by the non-craft community in restricting craft- workers not to participate in different social affairs. It is found that the major attributes that are accounted for the marginalization of craft workers are mainly social constructions retained in negative stereotypes and evil eye ideology.

The causes of marginalization stemmed from the perception of the non-craft worker society where the beliefs and explanations are ideal and not justifiable. It is found that craft workers are stereotyped in negative characterizations as having poor life style, as being anti-social, wasteful, and unclean. These negative stereotypes are perceived to be inherited characters.

Moreover, the research revealed that potters are highly associated with evil eye. And the society believed that potters are possessed by inherited evil spirit that threatens life and endangers productivity. Whereas tanners stereotype is associated with 'impurity'.

Craft- workers were marginalized in many forms mainly, restriction from social associations, restriction in intermarriage with the non-craft people, and spatial segregation. And it is found that, craft workers of North Gonder Zone are socially excluded, culturally subordinated, and spatially segregated. Additionally, it is found craft workers in North Gonder are marginalized occupational groups.

Nowadays some forms of marginalization are declining and hence there is spatial integration of craft workers as well as intermarriage specifically with potters. Changes are also evidenced in increase of craft workers participation mainly potters in various social associations with non-craft people.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations have been made;

The causes of marginalization are stemmed from the perception of the non-craft worker society. Andthe beliefs and explanations are not justifiable. Therefore, concerned bodies should undertake intervention measures through public teaching as well as religious teaching programs to change the traditional beliefs of the society.

Hand craft working has been discouraged by the non-craft worker society and the continuity of the skill of handcraft working would be difficult .Therefore, culture and tourism sector of the government needto promote the importance of 'indigenous crafts'.

Right of craft workers is not respected so the government should design programs to teach the society about equality should stand for their right.

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