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PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF DOMESTIC ADOPTION IN ADAMA CITY

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Abstract
Adoption is a childcare and protection measure that enables an unaccompanied child to benefit from a substitute and permanent family care; it can be either domestic or inter-country. This study examined perceptions and practices of domestic adoption in Adama City in Oromia/Ethiopia. Interviews and document review were used in gathering information. Six (6) adoptive parents and thirteen (13) other community members participated in in-depth interviews and six (6) key informant interviews were made with staffs of three adoption agencies. Narrative analysis technique was employed. The study reveals that people's perception towards adoption practice, adoptive parents and children is mixed; it could be positive and encouraging or negative and discouraging. Personal, religious and moral reasons are major sources of justification for those who adopt children whereas few of them centrally focus on meeting needs and interests of the child. Fear of property inheritance by the adoptive child in the future is the most important factor for people who refrain from adopting children. Banning inter-country adoption by the government of Ethiopia as of January 2018 while there are sizable children in need of substitute and permanent family care proves the necessity of cultivating domestic adoption practices and revitalizing Guddifachaa which is customary alternative childcare practice originated among the Oromo and widely accepted across the country.

Kewords: Domestic adoption, Guddifachaa, Adoptive parents, Adoptive children, Adama

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Introduction

Adoption is a childcare and protection measure that enables an unaccompanied child to benefit from a substitute and permanent family care (MOWCYA 2009). It is one of the effective alternative cares yet it raises highly emotive issues because of its fundamental implications for the meaning of familial ties. Adoption can be either domestic or inter-country in its form. Inter-country adoption is an adoption that involves a change in the child's habitual country of residence whatever the nationality of the adopting parents. It includes an adoption that involves parents of a nationality other than that of the child, whether or not they reside and continue to reside in the child's habitual country of residence, whereas, domestic adoption is an adoption that involves adoptive parents and a child of the same nationality and the same country of residence (MOWCYA 2009).

Literatures reveal strengths and drawbacks of various alternative child care arrangements including both international and domestic adoptions. For instance, there is criticism against international adoption by those who equating it with child trafficking (Smolin 2004) and commoditization of children (Graff 2008 cited in Breuning 2009). Others also noted the expensive and lengthy nature of the cost of international adoption (Maldonado, 2006; Roby & Shaw 2006). Mezmur (2009) reveals challenges related to post cross-country adoption follow-up problems while the Alternative Childcare Guidelines (FDRE 2009) of Ethiopia raises the sustainability issues of other institutional care arrangements (MoWA 2009). Because of the aforementioned problems and other reasons, many developing countries including Ethiopia are resorting to local alternatives such as domestic adoption. In order to make this inclination more workable, it is imperative to know the current situation of adoption practice and people's perceptions about it.

Johnson (2002) revealed that compared with children placed in a foster care, adopted children generally do better provided that they have families who are competent, loving and socio-economically capable. Supporting the regulated type of international adoption, Bartholet (2007) also noted that children are denied of their most need of having potential supportive parents due to the negative and limiting nature of government regulations. However, others such as Smolin (2007) view that choosing inter-country adoption as the primary response to the extreme poverty of the birth family is a violation of international law. The international law clearly states that the first priority should be to keep families together. Opponents of international adoption argue that children are best served by remaining in their community of origin where they can enjoy their racial, ethnic and national heritage, and that they are put at risk when

placed with unrelated adoptive parents in foreign countries (Bartholet 2005).

In Ethiopia, compared to inter-country adoption which is a recent phenomenon, domestic adoption, locally known as Guddifachaa, is as old as living memory recalls. However, domestic adoption of a child following the legal procedures is probably as recent as inter-country adoption. Although the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, and respective offices at regional level have taken the lead in following up the adoption cases, there appears to be a lack of proper documentation that shows the trend, situation of current practices at community level and people's perception about the practice, adoptive children and parents. In this regard, one national study documented that "there is a general lack of understanding of the relevance of domestic adoption (i.e., the relevance of legally formalizing the relationship between a care giver and an unrelated child for whom they are caring on a permanent basis)" (FHI, 2010 p.15).Thus, as part of finding and improving sustainable alternative childcare, domestic adoption has gained momentum in the country.

Correspondingly, many scholars have conducted researches on the issues of alternative childcare for orphan and vulnerable children in Ethiopia. To mention a few, Guddifachaa practice as child problem intervention in Oromo society by Dessalegn (2006) adhered to collect and document valuable socio-cultural practices data in solving the problems of children. This study emphasizes why Guddifachaa is practiced, how the practice is community-based problem intervention system and factors influencing the practice. Similarly, a study on community response for orphan and vulnerable children in Guagua town by Yohannes (2006) came up with inputs for designing community-based programs and strategies to address the problem. Birth families and inter-country adoption in Addis Ababa was studied by Brittingham (2010) which explored circumstances in which birth families relinquish their children for inter-country adoption.

In addition, there is also a study on improving care options for children in Ethiopia through understanding institutional child care and factors driving institutions by FHI (2010). Ayalew's (2002) study on Guddifachaa as adoption practice in Oromo society with particular reference to the Borana Oromo is another piece of work in the area. Ayalew documented the indigenous Guddifachaa practice as ethnographic material by investigating and examining the beginning, use, practice and kind of Guddifachaa in general and its role as advancing child protection and care and support in Oromo culture. Moreover, child adoption with

emphasis on its trends and policies was assessed by UN (2009) and policy practice of inter-country versus domestic adoption by child care institutions was analyzed by Ayana (2015). The latter in particular compares and contrasts domestic and inter-country adoption through examining policies and practices in addressing OVC problems in Adama City Administration. However, as far as the scanning of these literatures goes, none of these researchers have deeply analyzed the people's perceptions and practices of domestic adoption based on the experience of adoptive parents, adoption agencies and other community members. This study, therefore, is intended to understand people's perceptions and their practices related to domestic adoption in Ethiopia specifically in Adama City of Oromia.

Methods
The study employed qualitative research approach in order to understand different viewpoints and experiences of the study participants, and meanings they attach to their practices. Qualitative approach also enabled the researchers to put domestic adoption in contexts that shape the views, practices and indigenous interventions like Guddifachaa. In-depth interviews, key informant interviews and document review were used to gather information. The study employed semi-structured interview with adoptive parents, other community members and key informants. A total of twenty five (25) informants participated in the study. These include thirteen (13) individuals from the community, six (6) adoptive parents, and six (6) key informants from non-governmental and governmental adoption agencies. All study participants were selected purposively based on their experiences and perceived knowledge about the topic of the study. Individuals from the community were selected based on their inclination and personal criteria to adopt a child. Adoptive parents were identified through the agencies they get such services and key informants were selected from non-government and government offices based on their role and contribution to the issue at hand.

Alternative Childcare Guidelines (FDRE/MoWA 2009) which is the main document in regulating adoption and other alternative childcare interventions in Ethiopia is reviewed as secondary source of information. Usability, harmony and contradictions between the guidelines, adoption agencies and adoptive parents were analyzed with some reflections on selected articles in the document. The guideline was used not only as a data source but as opportunity to briefly introduce to readers who have no or little chance to use the guideline. Towards these ends, main purpose of adoption, criteria and procedures of adoption, and effects of

adoption are presented for readers and practitioners as quick reference when the need arises.

Purposes of the study were declared; voluntary participation was informed and oral consents were secured from all participants in the study. All audio materials were transcribed and translated from Afan Oromo or Amharic to English. Confidentiality and anonymity of the study participants were carefully maintained during information gathering, analysis and post analysis. Narrative data analysis technique was used based on themes developed in line with the research questions. The themes include perception of community members about domestic adoption and adoption practices in Adama City.

Findings
Perceptions and Practices of People about Domestic Adoption
This section highlights people's perceptions about domestic adoption in general and to adoptive parents and adoptive children in particular. Moreover, people's views and motives to become adoptive parents at the present or in the future were explored to sketch the overall tendency of the community to adoption practice as a means of solving children's needs of growing in the family environment. Why do some people adopt children whereas others do not? How do people who have not adopted children respond to adoptive parents and adoptive children? In attempt to addressing these basic questions, the study found that almost all study participants from the community know the presence of legal domestic adoption practice in the city through different means like by the chance they get to volunteer at orphanage, from adoptive parents, through work exposure and media. With regards to their inclinations towards adopting children, the participants were asked if they would like to practice domestic adoption. In response to the question, while five out of thirteen have interest to adopt children domestically but not right at the time of the study, eight participants who have no interest to adopt children have reported different reasons for their avoidance that worth knowing. A single participant might have reported more than one reason not to adopt a child or to postpone it to the future. Experiences of adoption agencies and adoptive parents are also briefly presented.

Perceptions and Practices of Domestic Adoption
This section presents practices of the six adoptive parents and 3 adoptive agencies with primary focus of what and how they have been working. Their experiences and observation of the community with regards to their response to children's needs through domestic adoption are documented.

Experiences of the Adoptive Parents

Analysis of the experiences of the six adoptive parents in Adama City mainly focuses on capturing the motivation factors behind adopting children in the context of that community. Accordingly, motivations behind adopting children are identified which include infertility, observance of religious duty and need for child with the other sex or more children. These key motivation factors are briefly presented next.

Primary infertility which refers to inability to give birth from the beginning and secondary infertility which occurs after having one or more children are considered among the major motivating factors for adopting children. So, the practice is considered as a means of filling gaps in a family by introducing or adding more children. Hence, it has psychological, emotional and social benefits to the adoptive parents as lack of children is considered as defect of the family in line with the conventional definition of the family which requires the composition of husband, wife and children. By adopting, child-parent relationship is established; new emotional attachment is created; positive feeling and self-image is built all of which are either missing or compromised otherwise. As one informant expressed it, it is unfortunate not to have biological children which in turn results in lack of happiness and adoption can cure it if it is successfully managed. It also exposes to stereotypic view as an applicant from outside Adama came to stay there in the city for nine months and attempted to secretly process the adoption to pretend as if she had got pregnant there and gave birth to the child in order to break people's negative attitudes towards her and her family because of the infertility.

Others invoke their religious duties or moral obligation to help others in need of assistance including children. That is, adoption is considered as serving God by helping the destitute. In this view, people adopt unaccompanied children to please the Creator hence not for immediate personal, emotional or social benefits rather to fulfil spiritual duty. The practice is also morally justified to be good that people refer to as acceptable. Finally, looking for the missing sex or adjusting number of male and female children's composition in a family whereby sex ratio of the biological children is not as desired by the adoptive parents. It is also revealed that some applicants' intention to adopt a child is seeking the child for labor services as assessment of their motivation is screened out by agencies of adoption.

Practices of Adoptive Parents and Agencies by Child Adoption Agencies

In this section, the practice of domestic adoption in two adoption agencies for the last four years is presented. Figures summarized in Table 1 shows that a total of 69 children were placed to adoptive parents over four years in which males and females constitute 26 (37.7%) and 43 (62.3%) respectively. That is, on average, less than 20 children were placed per year in the city and an adoption agency was placing less than 10 children per year. It would be difficult to evaluate whether this figure is adequate or not since we have no data about the total number of children in need of adoptive parents because of incomplete registration hence no way to know the total child population potentially need adoptive parents. Agency I had placed consistently and with increment trend over the four years whereas Agency II had not placed any child in the year 2016 and shows inconsistent trend over the years in the number of children it placed to adoptive parents.

Table 1: Summary of Children Adopted in Adama City by Sex and Year, 2013-2016

Number of children adopted by agency, by year and sex										
Year	2013		2014		2015		2016		Sub-total by sex and agency		Total by Agency
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Agency I	2	2	2	3	3	4	7	13	14	22	36
Agency I	3	5	1	1	8	15	-	-	12	21	33
Sub-total by Sex and Year	5	7	3	4	11	19	7	13	26	43	
Total by year	12		7		30		20				
Overall total for 2013-2016											69

Table 1 also shows that Agency I placed a total number of 36 children of which 14 of them are male and 22 female during 2013-2016. Agency II placed 33 children (12 male and 21 female) for domestic adoption from 2013-2015. The third agency (child centre) working on children in Adama City had not placed any children over the years but it had been linking applicants with the other two adoption agencies. The above data shows that the number of female adopted children exceeds that of male. Similarly, key informants also revealed that most prospective parents

prefer female children than male for adoption and raise different reasons for their preference such as female child is good in helping her families especially her mother at home or other places in different ways.

Community's Responses to Adoptive Parents and Adoptive Children

Disapproval societal conception against children adopted from orphanage is among the challenges to adoption practice in Adama City. In response to the question related to the perception of the community towards adoptive parents and adopted children, parents have experienced and received different opinions from people around them. Even if the opinion or attitude of the surrounding community varies because of different reasons, the purpose behind their adoption takes the major part. The attitude of the community for those who have biological children and other parents who could not give birth to a child is different. According to the responses, some are encouraged by people in their surrounding as they are doing a noble job while some are discouraged by others for their decision to adopt a child. Overall, informants experienced both positive and negative responses of the community towards adopted children which will be discussed next.

People who are in favor of the adoption mainly relate the practice to spiritual and moral grounds. They believe that these adoptive parents have done recommendable job which was not dared by many of other people. They were appreciated for supporting non-related children who are in need of parental environment. One of the participants who adopted a child having a biological child describes the positive perception of the community around them as follows:

> *Almost all people around me know as I have an adopted child and most of them are happy with it. They appreciate me in many ways and tell me as I am doing a wonderful job. My neighbours are also inspired to adopt a child who is in need of parental care and the same is true with my cousin who is now on process to adopt child domestically.*

Another adoptive parent also mentions acceptance of adoption practice by the community as follows:

> *There might be people who do not accept adoption practice and discourage parents who have adopted children; however, based on my experience, I have never seen this kind of rejection from people around me. Of course, I don't know what they say or feel behind me. But*

> *they are really supportive and encouraging in front of me.*
> *They have good interaction not only with me but also with*
> *my children.*

On the contrary, one of the participants mentioned that people around him fear the inclusion of new family member as if they are competitors with the biological children. Their central concern was property inheritance that the adoptive child is legally entitled to share equally with the biological children. Another, an adoptive single woman participant also described that the societal perception forced her not to let her adopted child to play with other kids in the neighbourhood fearing they might hurt her child. She narrated the opinion regarding her experience after adopting her child as;

> *Sometimes, I feel like people don't understand the true*
> *meaning of legal adoption. They still consider my adopted*
> *child as an orphan who simply lives in my home. They*
> *never know how I feel about her and how it hurts me when*
> *they see her like a stranger. I used to fight with my*
> *neighbours because of her. But now I decided not late her*
> *play outside even if I know this will be difficult for my*
> *daughter. I wish I could go somewhere and live with new*
> *people who do not have idea about me and my adopted*
> *daughter.*

Children who are adopted from orphanages face more negative responses from the community. Informants reported that there is societal misconception about orphanage and children adopted from this institution. According to some informants, community members assume that all orphans or unaccompanied children who come from orphanage misbehave and spoil other children. They also think that such children are purposeless.

As it could be seen from adoptive parents' experiences, people are viewing adopting children mostly from the challenging aspect. Particularly for those parents who have biological children, people assume potential future conflict of interest between adoptive and biological children on inheritance is inevitable. Some even overlook the very nature of all children that they require special protection and care. Some also consider adoption as a cause of compromising or even losing one's own privacy. As already mentioned, people also assume children adopted from orphanage (institutions) are source of problems among the family as if they always have behavioural problems. This misconceptions and stereotyping attitude in the community is a challenge for the

promotion of domestic adoption so that many children in need could be adopted by new families.

Why do People are not interested to adopt a child?
Earning low income: As some of the informants reported, feeling of fear that their income is not enough to adopt a child as additional family member limits them from having interest to adopt a child. This implies that family poverty or low family income along with having biological children may hamper people's propensity to adopt unaccompanied children though they are aware of the practice. However, it should not be accounted for conclusion that the poor people do not or cannot adopt a child as there are poor adoptive parents on the one hand and well-to-do families who refuse to adopt children on the other for other economic and non-economic reasons.

Fear of committing sin: Fear of giving unfair differential treatment for biological children and the adopted child is one of the reasons behind some informants for not having interest to adopt child. An informant emphasizes that:

> *It's undeniable that adopting a child is a best practice which has to be strengthened in all communities whether for the benefit of child by getting parent or the benefit of parents by getting child. But, even if it's a holy practice which is accepted by our creator (God), it will also expose to engage in unfair activities which are sin and not accepted in front of God. As I understand, taking a child to adopt means accepting as biological child and the parents have to give equal affection and love for the adopted one as they give or care for their biological child… and I am not sure that I can be that type of parent for my adopted child.*

As implied in the quotation, this participant is in a paradox between principles and practices of adopting a child. In principle, the participant appreciates adopting a child and sees it as will of God and socially desired but practically she is refraining from living up to the expectations as she failed to do what she is supposed to do, that is, adopting a child. Accordingly, this study participant is in a fear of failure to balance between two competing values or even divine rules of adopting a needy child and equally treating adoptive children with ones' biological children. It appears that the informant in principle believes in equally treating adoptive and biological children but she also thinks that doing this is difficult though God and society demand it. Hence, she considered avoidance of adopting children as a better evil than failure to equally

care for and treat the children after adopting. This is a good example of how people's views and believes contradict with their actual lives. It clearly shows as sympathy alone does not help needy children but little action can change their lives. Further assessment on experiences and interactions of adoptive parents and children with emphasis on the quality of their parent-child relations as well as biological-adoptive children would give more conclusive findings.

Fear of disappointment by the child: Some informants share the idea that they have no interest to adopt children because of fearing disappointment by the adopted children that would happen one day in life. One of the informants with no biological child stated that:

> *Since I am not lucky to have my own (*biological*) child, adoption would be a good option. It can make you feel as if you have full family, and naturally children are gifted to please parents but it's not long lasting when it comes to adoption. One of my relatives adopted a child and after a while she (*the adopted child*) understood that she is adoptee and her parents who she had known for long period of time are not her biological parents. She immediately started searching for her real mother and father. After long time, she found her biological father and she abandoned her adoptive parents to live with him. Have you imagined how it hurts? My relative was really disappointed too much at that time… then I realized that whatever your best you do for your adopted child, he/she is not yours and it's true proverb that "Yesew lij yesew new" (* which is roughly translated as 'other's child belongs to others*) .*

From this scenario, it is very clear that lack of biological children does not guarantee whether the couples would likely adopt a child as it is not conclusive that having biological children necessarily hampers the practice. Fear of conflicting relationship between the adoptive parents and the adoptee may end up in damaging outcome on the parents if the children abandon them. It is also important to note that adoption relationship can hurt the involving parties unless it is carefully managed as questions of identity and belongingness accompany the relationship. Tendency of reducing the purpose of adoption to personal happiness of the adoptive parents alone regardless of the child's needs, interests and rights also jeopardizes realization of child protection. Further studies on factors affecting parent-child relationship in adoptive families, parenting skills and management of adoptive children's development are

imperative to map sources and solutions of fears of disappointments related to adoption relations.

Hating long adoption bureaucratic process: Some informants consider procedure of adoption as a long process and they are not interested to adopt child hating that exhaustive process. These people look for short, simplistic and less formal procedures of adoption processes. In contrary, some community members and workers of the agencies or children's centre emphasize the procedures should be more strict than it is now for the sake of children's safety and protection. They also remind that not all people want to adopt children mainly for the advantages of the children rather intended to use the children to serve them in one way or another. This might emanate from lack of awareness about children's best interests, urgent needs and rights.

The above mentioned reasons are reported as potentially inhibiting factors from having interest of domestically adopting children in Adama City. The factors represent economic, psychosocial, spiritual and bureaucratic constraints to positively perceive and/or practice Guddifichaa. More exhaustive reasons of why people refrain from adopting children and robust measurement of potential factors could have been more informative and conclusive which is considerable in the future by same or other researchers.

I want to adopt a child but not right now
The other five informants who were interested to adopt but not yet were also asked why they have not adopted a child until this interview time and their responses are summarized as follows. That is, they have positive perception for domestic adoption and they have future plan to adopt children. Some of their reasons for the postponement of adopting children are briefly outlined below.

Waiting until settling life: Informants raised the issue of not settling in terms of marriage, place of residence and income level as reasons for still not adopting children even if they have keen interest to adopt. These notions inform that decisions about adoption practice are made based on the current and the future concerns given adoption is a lifetime commitment and relationship. Hence, ideas, interests and values of the significant others particularly that of the spouse (the other would be parents) are considerable. Adoption is part of family formation and family lives that consent of the spouse in the future is central to the decision. Therefore, becoming an adoptive parent for unmarried person but has a plan to marry in the future is not be a simple decision as it will be part of marriage negotiation. Such uncertainties could be enough reasons not to

adapt a child right at a certain time taking provisions of the guidelines into considerations.

Moreover, adoption also raises residential and economic concerns that fulfilling the child's needs of proper growth and development require child-friendly environment and economic inputs. Unstable settlement not only affects child's adaptation to environment but also complicates regular follow up and legal protection by the government respective offices. Parenting capacity of the adoptive parents is also partly affected by their income level that the informants see as considerable which again the adoption guideline duly underlines as an important factor. This informs us that having a positive perception for practicing domestic adoption alone is not a sufficient condition though it is necessary. Multiple factors operating at different levels converge into the decision making processes of adoption relationships. Hence, there is a possibility to postpone becoming an adoptive parent until fulfilling some perceived and real preconditions for adopting a child including legal restrictions or requirements to qualify the parenthood status. Among others, ensuring a status of living whereby it is likely to lead a better life for oneself and one's family affects people's current decision to adopt.

Waiting for spouses' consent: Informants also mentioned that they are waiting for the consent of their spouses as a main reason for not adopting until the interview time even if they are interested in adopting a child. Legal provisions for the process of adoption also stipulate consent of both spouses as an important and inexcusable criterion in the endorsement of adoption relationships. A male informant explains his concern of getting cooperation from his wife as:

> *Even if I am really interested in the issue of adoption, I didn't adopt a child still now because adoption is not made by the interest and decision of one individual especially when you are married. Your spouse also has to be interested in the issue otherwise it cannot work out or be successful. Honestly speaking, my wife is not inherently against adoption because she also loves doing humanitarian activities as I do but she is not ready to adopt a child at this time. So, I have to wait for her when she is fully motivated to adopt.*

Given adoption practice and the guidelines take the existence of family into context and it also involves rights of husband and wife with regard to admitting a new member to ones' family, having similar interest and committing oneself to give care and childhood status for the adoptee by

the couples are quite essential conditions to practice it. In the above quotation, we notice that both husband and wife have similar interest to adopt a child but there is mismatch between the two on when it should happen. Therefore, in addition to the income level of a certain family, timing in the course of marriage life affects when a family can adopt a child even when both have interest to adopt.

In addition to those reasons reported by the potential adoptive parents as concerns on their side, key informants also revealed some external factors that prohibit them from adopting regardless of their interest to adopt a child. Among others, inability to fulfil criteria of adoption mentioned in the guidelines is also equally important factor for not adopting a child for some individuals who are willing to adopt. According to the key informants, there are people who are highly disappointed when they know that they cannot adopt a child due to some criteria specified in the guidelines. For instance, a participant complains against the criteria saying that, "*Of all, children need love and good heart. And for sure, I can give love for my adopted child from the bottom of my heart. But what you are asked to fulfil is other stuffs which are not more important than love.*"

Generally, this and other potential applicants who are refused to adopt have complaints against some criteria regarding eligible children for adoption, criteria about applicants' different backgrounds and statuses as well as the bureaucratic procedures to adopt a child. This and related concerns are presented in the discussion section to which now we turn.

Discussion
Alternative Childcare Guidelines versus People's Perceptions and Practices
This section briefly discusses empirical findings of this study against policy provision that is designed partly to ensure implementation of adoption in general and domestic adoption in particular. The authors believe that such discussion on regulatory and policy documents against their actual application at the community level would bring policy makers, policy implementers and direct beneficiaries close together for the fulfilment of their common goals. Absence of such reflective analysis in Ethiopia has created vacuum between the academia and development policies though doing so is quite demanded by all public sectors. In this sense, this section presents selected articles from the guidelines in association with the key findings of the study. In so doing, problematic areas between provisions of the guidelines and people's response to them are identified.

To begin with, Alternative Childcare Guidelines on Community-Based Childcare, Reunification and Reintegration Program, Foster Care, Adoption and Institutional Care Service in Ethiopia was enacted in 2009 by the FDRE Ministry of Women's Affairs. Though detailed review of the entire document is much broader than the scope of this article, few introductory points to the guidelines are worth mentioning to get connected to the overall provisions in the guidelines. The document is organized into three sections: Background, Alternative Childcare Guideline, and Establishment, Code of Ethics and Monitoring and Evaluation. The background section presents rationale, objectives and principles of the guidelines. It also reveals the state of alternative childcare services in Ethiopia as it still requires more attention of coordinated efforts towards meeting children's needs and interests.

The second section of the guidelines outlines the five possible alternative childcare approaches which include community-based childcare, reunification and reintegration program, foster care, adoption and institutional care service. More importantly, this section provides specific practical guidelines (Dos and Don't Dos) in each of these alternative childcare approaches. Adoption guidelines for both inter-country and domestic forms are provided in same state document which interests these researchers for the purpose of discussion in this article. Section three describes establishment and licensing of childcare organizations, registration procedures, code of ethics, accountability, monitoring and evaluation systems, and application of the guidelines. To what extent norms provided in the guidelines are translated into practice on the ground? Evidence from the study site, Adama City, takes us along the answer in this piece of work.

The main purpose of adoption service is to cater for the proper care and development of orphans and destitute children by placing them in a substitute and suitable familial environment. Its specific objectives are securing basic services for adopted children including: shelter, food, education, health care and psychologically stimulating familial environment as well as to establish a substitute parental care and emotional bond between the child and adoptive parents. The document states that government is responsible for providing alternative childcare for children who cannot grow in the most desired family atmosphere of love and happiness, and hence in need of alternative care. Government also regulates its own and non-government actors who provide alternative childcare services.

The document lists roles and responsibilities played by different stakeholders in domestic adoption which include the government

through respective ministries, bureaus, offices, child adoption agencies, adoptive parents, biological parents and extended families, the community and individuals. One of the roles and responsibilities of childcare institutions in adoption is sensitizing the public to encourage domestic adoption (see sub-article 5.3) which is largely lacking in the study community. Childcare institutions in this sense refer to both governmental and non-governmental arrangements designed and mandated to provide services for vulnerable children. The regional relevant authorities shall follow-up the general situation of the adopted child (sub-article 9.5). One of the roles of Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) in adoption is ensuring that the right of an adopted child to information about his/her parents is respected (see sub-article 6.8).

Brief description of requirements provided in the guideline that inhibits people from the right to adopt a child gives overall clues for our readers. While the guidelines generally encourage domestic adoption in principle, some restricting procedural rules and compulsory criteria to adopt a child are listed under Article 8 (Eligibility to Adopt) of the guidelines. Sub-article 8.1 states that an applicant to adopt a child is expected to fulfil the following among others. Age of the applicant is restricted to 25-60 years; the applicant has to produce document that shows he/she has sufficient income to raise the child; that he/she is free from incurable or contagious diseases, mental health problem and criminal activities and that one has to produce marriage certificate and spouse's consent if he/she is married. As it appears here, there are many grounds on which application to adopt a child might be rejected which people are complaining against. Lack of relevant information in advance is also a cause for applicants' disappointment after they try the process given the guidelines are not accessible and not publicly promoted by the concerned offices both to avoid unnecessary attempts and to attract more relevant adoptive parents.

Likewise, adoption process involves a series of stages from the preparation phase including identification of the child and adoptive parents to the placement of the child in the adoptive family and beyond like follow up the child situation which are provided in Article 9. For instance, it states that, first, an agreement of adoption shall be signed between the potential adopter, the applicant and the parent/guardian of the child; second, the applicant shall submit his/her application to the Court in order to adopt the child that he/she has identified with a copy of his/her application to the relevant authority. Third, the relevant authority shall complete a detailed case study on the child and on the personal, social and economic positions of the applicant. Fourth, a child shall not be placed with the applicant before the contract of adoption is finalized

with the court's approval. Some people view these procedures as obstacles hence they tend to escape from committing themselves to such formal obligations and look for a sort of private adoption that is arranged through informal relations which is quite discouraged by same guidelines in its sub-article 6.9.

Adoption practice as provided in sub-article 10.1 of the guidelines has nine legally binding effects on parties involved in it such as biological parents or guardians, adoptive child and adoptive parents (FDRE 2009, 47) which are summarized with some reflections in the following paragraphs.

Once a contract of adoption is signed and approved by the Court, the biological parents, members of the extended family and/or guardians of the child have no right and obligation concerning the upbringing of the child. That is, adoption agreement can only be concluded in and approved by the Court. Other ways of formal or informal adoption agreement has no legal acceptance. It appears that this feature of the adoption guideline does not give due recognition for Guddifachaa as it has been culturally practiced even before the introduction of formal adoption practice. This may require some special arrangements that would be designed on how both (customary and legal) systems may work in harmony in solving such disagreements. Once a contract of adoption is signed in and approved by the Court, the adoptive parents assume all parental duties, rights and responsibilities over the child. In other words, roles, responsibilities and rights of upbringing shift from the biological parents to adoptive parents. That is, transfer of the child to a new family changes child-parenthood so it dissolves legal rights of biological parents with regards to upbringing.

Once a contract of adoption is signed, it is irrevocable. So long as the adoptive parents assume full parenthood status over the child, adoptive parents have legal rights not to miss the child even if the biological parents claim to take the child back. However, the Court may revoke the adoption if the adoptive parents, instead of looking after the adopted child as their own child, handle him as slave or in conditions resembling slavery, or make him engage in immoral acts for their gain, or handles him in any other manner that is detrimental to the child's future. This article concludes that rights of fatherhood of the adoptive parents are effective only under normal conditions as defined by laws and contravention with the laws can dismiss the parenthood rights.

The adopted child has the same rights as a biological child born to an adoptive parent. This is well known and among the potential cause for

people to refrain from adopting child. This effect gives the adoptive child equal rights to biological children in every aspect including inheritance upon death of a parent or parents. This economic implication of the adoption effects might be the most influential factor in decisions made by the well-off families than resource poor ones when it comes to welcome a child to one's family be it is foster family or adoption. People are very much fearful of this effect when they consider helping a child in their family as other studies also indicate (Firafis and Nega 2017). In this study, it was found that people were reluctant to admit foster children and their central worries were implications of fostering a child on inheritance of families' properties. Though a main problem in this regard was the people do not differentiate between adoption and other approaches of alternative childcare particularly foster care, people are careful about the issue of inheritance.

Adoption does not terminate filial and familial bond of lineage (relationship). That is, adoption does not break the relationship between the child and extended family relationships. So, attempting to totally isolate the adoptive child from his/her biological parents and other relatives is against provisions of the guideline. In relation to this effect, an adopted child has the right to acquire information about his/her biological parents and roots unless the accredited governmental body finds it against the best interests of the child. This also strengthens the idea that the child will remain connected to his/her biological parents and relatives that total belongingness to the new adoptive family is dubious.

Biological parents, members of the extended family and/or guardians of the child have the right to ask the accredited organization/s information as to the growth and development of the adopted child. So, it is not only the child but also biological parents, relatives and guardians are entitled to keep in touch with the child and follow up his/her condition even after adoption. They have the right to access to information about the child's psychological, social and economic conditions as well as they can also follow up. Moreover, all legally permitted expenses incurred during the processing of a contract of adoption shall be the responsibility of the adoptive parents, however, the child, after reaching majority, has the right to choose and decide on his/her identity.

Conclusion and Suggestive Recommendations
Having same knowledge about the presence of adoption practice in the city, people quite differently perceive and act in relation to domestic adoption practice. Their responses range from adopting children to postponing to adopt to avoiding it at all. Likewise, people differently respond, some positively others negatively, to the adoptive parents and

adoptive children. The people's responses, be it positive or negative, have direct or indirect implications on addressing unaccompanied children's pressing needs in the country. Though larger scale survey might be required to get conclusive finding on the prevalence of people who have positive response to domestic adoption, this study identified that there are divergent and mixed views on whether, how and when domestic adoption is practiced.

In addition to understanding differences between those who want and those who do not want to adopt children, and between those who have favourable and those who have unfavourable perception towards adoptive parents and adoptive children, internal differences within each category or subcategory are worth identification for their significance on intervention programs. For instance, the major motivation factors behind the adoptive parents are limited to personal, moral and religious viewpoints. Adopting a needy child for the sake of the child itself and discharging one's own social responsibility as a citizen is not boldly reported. That is, adopting a child is far from the sense of civic participation which in turn limits the number of children get opportunity to grow up in the family setting.

A multiple economic and non-economic reasons converge together in a complex and dynamic ways in making decision on domestic adoption in the study setting. Comprehensive understanding of factors affecting people's propensity to adopt children in different contexts are worth more empirical studies and systematic review on the issue in order to inform improved policy formulation and implementation.

Growing in a family environment is irreplaceable for a child's holistic development. The effect is beyond physically growing well and long lasting. Therefore, providing family setting for children in need should be given due attention by all citizens, development organizations and most importantly, the government given it is constitutionally responsible to ensure a child to grow in a family environment which is also clearly stated in the guidelines. The usual approach that the government is viewed as to play the regulatory roles alone whereas non-governmental organizations and citizens provide the services when it comes to vulnerable groups including children has to be challenged to put pressure on government that it has to design programmatic interventions and allocate budget to tackle the problems. Indeed, government is the main actor, provider and responsible to create systems, and avail resources that serve theses purposes. Otherwise, a vacuum of responsibility occurs whereby children's needs are unmet by anybody which has been happening in Ethiopia.

Key points provided in the guidelines have to be addressed to community members so that they get opportunity to know the provisions. This has got importance for those who have interest to adopt a child to get relevant information before they unnecessarily invest their time along the long procedure of adoption process. It also increases people's access to information about domestic adoption that can plan to adopt a child hence more children in need of adoptive parents will get chance of living in a family setting. Towards this end, it is commendable that districts' and towns' women and children's affairs offices have to inculcate provisions in the guidelines to communities they serve.

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