A Qualitative Study on Internal Migrants in Ethiopia: Causes, Experiences, Perceptions, Challenges and Future Life Orientations

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Abstract

This study was aimed at investigating migrant youths life experience in a city. Specifically, the study explored the major reasons for abandoning rural areas, migration process, challenges encountered, their perceptions about city life, and their future life orientation. The study employed qualitative research methods; hence, the participants of the research were selected purposively. Unstructured in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion guidelines were used for data collection. Accordingly, the migrant youths from Wolayta rural areas working around the premises of Addis Ababa University Main Campus were selected as the research participants. The study found out small amount of land holding, landlessness, lack of employment opportunities in their respective rural areas, high family size, household food insecurity, inability to pursue education and skill development and inability to afford medical services are among the major reasons for their migration as reported by the participants. High needs for self-reliance, high expectation of urban employment opportunities were also among the major reasons to migrate. In the process of their migration, the migrants got the information from either relatives or friends who had migrated before. The migrants, obtained information through phone communication and in the occasions of ‘Meskel’ or ‘Holy cross’ Holiday, the occasion migrant youths come back to their respective villages for the celebration, through face-to-face communications with those who had migrated before. The major challenges the migrant youths encountered after their arrivals were the inabilities to find jobs, high cost of living, inability to pursue education, inability to afford skill development trainings, and lack of comprehensive guides to facilitate easy settlements in the city. Nevertheless, the migrants have satisfied with their current living conditions. Above all, their independences and self-reliance’s created a sense of confidence and positive future life orientation. The government of Ethiopia has the five year Growth and Transformation Plan (2015-2020), to industrialize and solve sporadic ethnic conflicts among various ethnic groups. Migration can play a vital positive role in this regards. Encouraging migration through creating conducive situations in the city has paramount importance. It can easily provide skilled labor to industries as industries are available at large numbers in Addis Ababa and outskirts of Addis Ababa. It can also be an avenue to create inter-ethnic contact among various ethnic groups which will lead to integrations. The implication of the study demonstrates, the positive impacts of migration on the migrant youths life experiences’ and the country at large. The government should encourage the migrants by providing with services which help them cope up with urban life. This includes programs targeting the rural migrants in helping to have access to affordable housing scheme, education and skill development centers, medical services and job opportunities so that the migrants can settle permanently in the city.

1. Introduction

Ethiopia is one of the most populous countries in Africa with a population of 83 million (US Department of State, 2009). In 2006, 83.7 percent of the population was living in rural areas, and 16.3 percent of it was living in urban areas. The population is thus heavily concentrated on agricultural activities.

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In 2008, the population growth rate was 3.21 percent, which was the 11th highest in the world (World Development Indicators, 2008).

The majority of the population is engaged in agricultural economic activities (80 percent), which accounts for 46 percent of GDP. The government owns all of the land, and the average plot of land worked per family is one hectare. The majority of land is used for self-sufficiency, and the main cash crops for export are coffee and cereals. The increasing population puts further pressure on the land, making attainment of self-sufficiency more challenging. In addition to that, only one percent of arable land is irrigated. Hence, droughts have a devastating effect, which was witnessed during Ethiopia’s famines (Financial Standards Forum, 2009).

According to FAO (2009), Ethiopia has experienced catastrophic famines in 1973, 1977-78, 1983-84, 1987-88, and 1993. The famine of 1983-84 was the most severe that left over 1 million people dead. The report further noted that food security continues to be a challenge for Ethiopia and is a key driver of historical and current migration trends in Ethiopia.

Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon that generally involves the movement of people from one place to another. Migration is a change of residences either permanently or temporarily. Migration can be defined in terms of spatial boundaries as internal and international. Internal migration is the movement of individuals within a country whereas international migration involves the flow of individuals to countries in which national boundaries are crossed. The UN (1970:2) defines migration as: “... a move from one migration defining area to another (or a move of some specified minimum distance) that was made during a given migration interval and that involves change of residence.” A migrant is also defined as: “a person who has changed his usual place of residence from one migration-defining area to another (or who moved some specified minimum distance) at least once during the migration interval” (UN, 1970:2).

There are broadly four kinds of internal migration streams such as rural-urban, rural-rural, urban rural, and urban-urban, which all are present within a country. In many poor countries, rural-rural migration still dominates laborers from poorer regions travelling to the agriculturally prosperous, often irrigated, areas which have more job opportunities (Srivastava and Bhattacharyya, 2003). In the developing countries’ rural-urban migration is rapidly gaining importance especially in the urbanizing economies (Afsar, 2003; Zhao, 2003). Much of this migration includes travelling long-distance to the larger cities and manufacturing centers. However, there are also smaller moves, typically undertaken by poorer people, to smaller towns and conglomerations of non-farm activity (Pon and Acharya, 2001).

Urban-rural migration is another form of movement that occurs when people are retired and gone back to their respective villages of origins. This was common insub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s and 90s with retrenchment under structural adjustment programmes (Tacoli, 2001). The last form of internal migration is urban-urban. This migration is the predominant form of spatial movement in Latin America which has increased steadily since the 1980s. In Mexico, for example, between 1987 and 1992, 50 per cent of interstate movements (excluding intra-metropolitan movements) had urban areas as origin and destination, and between 1995 and 2000, 70 per cent of all municipal movements took place between urban areas. In Brazil, 61 per cent of all the inter-municipal movements occurred between 1981 and 1991 between cities (Cerruti and Bertoncello, 2003).

In the world, rural-urban migration has been historically connected with industrialization, urbanization and economic growth (Bhattacharya, 1993). Rural-urban migration eases inter-sectoral factor mobility and plays a vital role in structural changes. Moreover, migration has also been a key livelihood and survival strategy for many poor groups across the developing world, particularly in Africa. In Africa, migration has been considered as a way of life where the people migrate from place to place due to political, socio-economic and demographic reasons. Rural-urban migration has contributed to half of the urban population growth in Africa in 1960s and 70s which accounted for about 25% of urban growth in 1980s and 90s (Waddington & Sabates-Wheeler, 2003; Adepoju, 1977; Lall et al, 2006).
Concentration of investment in industries, commerce and social services in towns and cities has been the driving causes for regional inequalities and differences in economic opportunities. Furthermore, the productivity of rural agricultural sector has remained low that led to rural out-migration to the urban industrial sectors (Adepoju, 1977).

A report of DFID (2004) identified that 50-80 per cent of rural households in Sub-Saharan African Countries constitute at least one migrant member. In Sustainable Livelihoods, Access and Mobility Project study, only 18 percent of household heads in Uganda and 24 percent in Zimbabwe were born in the location where they lived. Ghana’s Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) also found out that 52 percent of the respondents were migrants, having previously lived somewhere else (Bryceson, 2003). After the lifting of restrictive legislation of the Apartheid rule in South Africa, internal mobility increased. The evidence was in the year 1993 in which 32.6 percent of South African households contained labour migrant household members; and the year 1999, the figure rose to 35.8 percent (Posel, 2003). Moreover, a survey data from the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) suggest that migration, in the sense of population movement away from communities of origin into new localities, has become the rule not the exception for most of the rural population of South Africa’s coastal provinces (Cross, 2001).

In Ethiopia, likewise, mobility has increased as population movement controls have been relaxed or removed (RESAL, 1999). The UNCHR (2009) estimates 300,000 internal migrants in Ethiopia as compared with around 60,000 refugees that reside in other countries. De Waal (1991) and Ezra & Kiros (2001) referred that internal migration in Ethiopia has traditionally occurred due to marriage when the wife moves to live in the husband’s community. In addition to traditional internal mobility, urbanization in Ethiopia is a growing trend that puts pressure on urban infrastructure and resources.

An increase in internal migration in Ethiopia is associated with economic and political transitions of the country. This is associated with the country’s economic system transition from a socialist (command) to a market-oriented economy, critical political changes since the 1970s and 90s civil war and famine (Kiros and White, 2004; Berhanu and White, 2000). The situations of internal migration even got worse from time to time. Evidences showed that flows in Ethiopia are currently larger than external flows, but the exact number of people who migrated internally is unknown (De Waal, 1991: Ezra & Kiros, 2001).

Study conducted on Sub-Saharan African countries revealed that the youths are integral components of the migrant population in terms of both volume and the effects they have on both their points of origin and destination. Estimates indicate that 15 percent (approximately 26 million) of the migrant population are youth (Touray, 2006).

Rural to urban migration in Ethiopia among youth between the age of 10 and 19 years primarily occurred in search of educational opportunities (44.9 percent of boys and 51.4 percent of girls), followed by employment opportunities (28.6 percent of boys and 32.4 percent of girls) and for escaping early marriages (22.7 percent of girls) (Erulkar et al., 2006).

However, after migrations, 13 percent of girls and 21 percent of males do not attend school and 19 percent of females who migrated for work were not employed (Erulkar et al., 2006). The opportunities for work are limited to informal work such as domestic work, coffee shop assistant, or bar girl (Van Blerk, 2007).

Many rural migrants are no better off in the city than they were in their respective villages. By fleeing their traditional culture, the youths from rural have become victims for not getting the human rights such as parental protections and legal rights. Urban areas are becoming extremely overcrowded and overburdened in putting pressure on insufficient infrastructures, schools, health facilities, sanitation and water systems. Life in the city has resulted in marginalization and social exclusion (Charlotte Min-Harris, 2010).

In the present study migrant youths from rural Wolayta were the targets. To be specific, the land area of Wolayta measures 438,370 hectares, or 4500 Kilometer square, of which 54 percent is cultivated, 11 percent employed for grazing, and 21 percent under bush, shrubs and forest cover. In various studies, Wolayta has always been associated with high population. Travelers who passed through the area in the first decade of the
 twentieth century spoke of dense settlements and crowded markets (Desalegn, 2007). Besides, the population of Wolayta is overwhelmingly rural. According to the 2007 population and housing census of Ethiopia, Wolayta had a total population of 3.7 million people or 2.31 percent of the country’s population. As the 2007 census showed, the urban inhabitants were only 289,707 which is 12.7 % less than the national and regional average of 17% and 16% respectively (CSA, 2007). According to Desalegn (2007), Wolayta Stands as least ‘Urbanized Zone’ of the Southern Ethiopian regional areas as compared with other neighboring areas. The areas fertility rate is considered as one of the highest in the country in which the average rural women have has 6.9 children during their reproductive years. In contrast, productive resources and environmental assets (land, soil, natural vegetation, water resources, etc) have dwindled considerably over the last four decades.

Wolayta is a land of micro-holdings and micro farming. Moreover, the per capita land holdings have always been relatively small as compared with other parts of the country. The evidence further indicates that family holdings have been growing smaller and smaller through the decades. In the recent years, this is compounded by growing landlessness, especially among the youth. Various documents indicate that two-thirds of the households are micro holders, their holding measuring less than 0.5 hectare (Desalegn, 2007).

The concentration of the population is high in Wolayta compared with other areas in the region and outside of the region. For instance, we can indicate the population density existing in different locations within the zone, Bolosso has a population density of 637 persons per Km$^2$, Damot Gale 750 Km$^2$, Soddo Zuria 438 Km$^2$, and for the Zone as a whole the density is 360 Km$^2$ (BFED, 2005). For comparative purposes, we should note that the population density in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region where Wolayta Zone resides is 118, in Amhara 108, and Oromia 67 Km$^2$ (Eyasu, 2002). Under the circumstances, such demographic concentrations pose grave risks for human health, and are the basis of rural vulnerability and poverty. High population has led to immense pressure on environmental resources. Much of the forest cover of the area has long disappeared; there is continuous cropping of farm land.

The focus of the research is investigating life experience of migrant youths from rural Wolayta. Therefore, this study gives much focus on probing the lived life experiences of the youths following their migrations.

In doing so, the current research seeks to answer the following basic research questions.

- What are the major causes for the youths migration from rural Wolayta area to Addis Ababa?
- How the migrant youths perceive their life circumstances in Addis Ababa?
- What is the experience of migrant youths in city compared with rural?
- What are the major challenges the migrant youths encountered?
- What are the migrant youths future life orientations?

2. Methodology

In this section, the research method was discussed. This entails the selection of a qualitative research design and preparation for the data collection. Decisions on how the sample was framed and developed, and methods of data collection and analysis have presented.

Study Area

- **Origin Area of Migrants [Wolayta Zone]**

Wolayta is the origin area to the migrants in the present study. The physical and administrative identity of Wolayta has remained unchanged for over a century, except for a brief interlude in the late 1980s and 90s, under the imperial regime, the area was an Awuraja within what was then called Sidamo province. This status continued even after the revolution, until the Derg undertook the administrative restructuring of the country in the second half of the 1980s. At this point, the name Wolayta disappeared when the seven Woredas of the Awuraja were grouped together with eleven Woredas in Gamu and Goffa Awurajas to form
the North Omo Region. Following the fall of the Derg and the creation of self-governing units within Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region, Wolayta was denied the right of local autonomy because its constituent units, the seven woredas were still part of North Omo Zone. From the second half of the 1990s, citizens of Wolayta waged a long and bitter struggle to reclaim their identity and their language, and to demand the establishment of Wolayta as a zone with its own local self-government in Southern Nation, Nationalities and People’s Region (Desssalegn, 2007).

![Figure 1: Location of Wolayta and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia](image)

- **Destination Area (Addis Ababa)**
  Addis Ababa City is the destination area to the migrants in the present study. Addis Ababa city located in the heart of the country and comprises 6 zones and 28 Woredas. The city covers about 540km² and is divided into 328 dwelling associations (Kebeles) of which 305 are urban and 23 rural. As the capital city of the country, almost all ethnic groups live in. the data collected from migrants living in this city.

- **Study Design**
  Qualitative research design was employed to investigate the problems under study. The qualitative research method concentrates on the qualities of human behaviors, that is, on the qualitative aspects against the quantitative measurable aspects of human behavior. The aim of the current study was not to explain human behavior in terms of universally valid laws or generalization, but to understand and interpret the meanings and intentions that underlie the everyday human actions. Therefore, the study was conducted with youths migrated from rural Wolayta to Addis Ababa. The study gave due attention to understand participants perspectives on their individual experiences after their migration.
Sampling

The sample was drawn from Addis Ababa City. For the sake of the study’s purpose, only youths migrated from Wolayta rural areas were purposely selected. Thus, purposive sampling was employed to select the research participants and sample size which was determined based on how much new information the participants were providing during the interview session. Hence, seven migrant youths were selected for the in-depth interviews and one FGD session was held with seven migrant youths.

Data Collection

The following data collection methods were employed: In-Depth Interviews with an interview guide used to collect data from youths (at the age 15-29) and Focus Group Discussion.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues that were considered in this study were debriefing, voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and the protection of the participants.

Debriefing

Before conducting the interviews and the FGDs, the purpose and procedures of the study were explained for the participants. The participants were informed about all the procedures that were to be followed in the study.

Data Analysis

Generally, the procedures described below were strictly followed for analyzing the qualitative data collected from the research participants using the interview and FGD guides.

Regarding qualitative data, the analysis involves aiming at uncovering and / or understanding the big picture. As qualitative analysis is more concerned with meaning, following the qualitative data analysis procedure is an indicative one. Thus, the data will be examined from a bottom-up approach. The specific data collected examined to identify more general themes used to understand the meaning of the data. The steps involved in the analysis of the qualitative data includes:

- ‘Getting to know’ the data: the researcher done this by listening carefully to the tape recordings.
- Transcribing the Interview: this allows the interview data to be formatted into a usable form and lets the researcher hear the data repeatedly as it is being transcribed. The common themes emerging at this stage too recorded.
- Preliminary Exploratory Analysis: from this initial review of the transcript the researcher saw themes emerging from the data. Sections of the transcripts that reflect a theme are identified. Generally, the following tasks were carried out;
  - Coding techniques for finding and marking the underlying ideas in the data;
  - Grouping similar kinds of information together in categories;
  - Relating different ideas and themes to one another
- Making Connections to the Research Questions: This involves describing and further developing the themes from the data to answer the major research questions. The themes identified previously are revisited with the major research questions as the lenses for analysis. Then, creating coding scheme that best defines the themes that have been identified and provided a way to break up for further analysis.
- Inter-rater Reliability: to ensure the reliability of the coding schemes, it is valuable to have another’s perspective. My colleagues reviewed the transcript and used the established coding schemes to
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code the data. Results are then shared and minor discrepancies are discussed and resolved. Changes in the coding system included additions, deletions, and clarifications.

Interpreting the Findings: once the data have been coded, it then divided into themes. This done by cutting up the interview data blocks and scoring them into each of the codes. The data is then reviewed within the themes or categories, an understanding of each theme is reached. Quotes selected that best illustrates the meaning of the category, this provided a ‘voice’ to the participants interviewed when describing the data.

3. Findings of the Study

The previous section outlines the research design and this section presents the data analysis. A brief introduction of each participant is presented before moving on the analysis of the data.

• Brief Background of the Migrants

In this research, seven participants were used for the in-depth interview. The respondents were drawn based on their previous areas of residence, which are rural parts of Wolayta Zone from which they migrated to Addis Ababa in search of better life. Moreover, the participants must stay in Addis Ababa more than a year to be included in the interview. Regarding the ages of the participants, they range from 15-20 years. The current educational status of all the research participants was grade 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 dropouts. The participants came from rural area of Wolayta namely Gununo, Offa Sere, Gendba, Bosa Qachaand Bombay. They come from relatively large family size out of which the small number of family size stated during interview was five and the largest family size reported was nine. According to the research participants, the source income for their family was subsistence farming as reported by the six participants and one of the participant responded that tailor of old clothes in the village market was the source of income for the family. According to the research participants, their evaluation about their family socioeconomic status in comparison with others living in their community was poor, which they referred that their families were not capable of providing the basic needs such as food, cloth and shelter including education for the children’s in the household. With regard to their sex, five of the participants were males and the remaining two were female. The research participants do various things for their living in Addis Ababa City that includes shoes shining, selling used electronic equipment and selling lottery tickets. According to the participants, their monthly earnings range from 1,000-2,000 Ethiopian Birr which means 50-100 USD. All of the participants, lived in Addis Ababa for more than 3 years where the minimum is 3 and maximum 12 years.

• Causes of Migration

According to the research report, various causes played as a push and pull factors in instigating youths migration from rural to urban areas. The major reasons listed were poverty, small land holding, large family size, unmet needs, and aspiration of city life.

Poverty

All the participants stated that their poor living condition being the major cause for migration to Addis Ababa from their respective original place of living. Since the participants’ family do subsistence farming for a living, it was not enough to fulfill their basic needs. They stated that the reason they have migrated to Addis Ababa was in search of better life in order to fulfill their necessities. “It is only poverty that forced me to leave my place of birth. I believed that I would have better life in Addis than in Gendba”[Interviewee 3, age 18]. They replied that their families earn very small amount of money that was not enough to meet the basic needs of the family.
Small Land Holding

The research participants further stated that their families had very small plot of land that their livelihoods depend to generate income. They could not get accesses to any modern input for their farming because they are poor and could not afford for the fact that the food they produced was not enough to feed the family and to meet the basic needs. According to the research participants, the children left alone to live their life by themselves because no one cared for their needs. Therefore, living in the rural area made their life severe that forced them to migrate to escape this hardship. The interviewees reported that the only viable option to improve their living condition was migration. For instance, one of the participants in the interview said “though my family holds small amount of land, my father was chronically ill so he could not work and provide my needs” [Interviewee 1, age 17].

Large Family Size

Large family size of the migrant youths was a major challenge for their families to meet the necessary basic needs. The research participant revealed that their parents were unable to provide them due to large family size. One of the interviewee said ‘imagine I have seven siblings and how could I expect my families for providing my need even when they could not do for themselves?’ [Interviewee 5, age 19].

Unmet Needs

The interviewees also stated that if they stayed in rural area, their life would continue to deteriorate. For instance, two of the participants reported “my families refused to cover for my education, cloth, food and they forced me in searching any job for providing for myself” [Interviewee 6, age 20]. The other reported “my families refused to afford for my education” [Interviewee 2, age 16]. The other still said “my families are poor to fulfill my basic needs” [Interviewee 7, age 22]. Therefore, their inability to meet their basic needs coupled with the search of better life in the city that forced the youth to migrate.

Aspiration of City Life

The interviewees reported that their aspiration for better life in the city was a reason for migrating. The data obtained from the in-depth interview revealed that the youths were highly attracted by city life. This was caused by the information they received from their friends and relatives who had migrated before. One of the participant said “I know a friend who lives a better life after his migration” [Interviewee 4, age 21].

The data obtained through the focus group discussion complementary with data was elicited by in-depth interview. According to the focus group discussant, the families of the migrant youths were unable to provide them with their needs such as food, education and clothing. For instance, in the FGD discussion, the discussant said “in rural areas, our parents could not provide us with food, cloth, education and training” [FGD participant 2, age 19]. Another idea of discussants “the government was not giving much attention in creating better jobs and skill trainings for the rural youths” [FGD discussant 3, age 20].

Process in the Youth Migration

In their process of migration the participants stated that their source of information were their close friends and siblings. This information enabled them to decide to migrate.

Friends and Relatives

The interview revealed that the migrants had at least one person from their community who had migrated before them. For instance, one of the participants said ”I have a brother living in Addis Ababa who had told me the good life he was living” [Interviewee 2, age16]. The other respondents said “I do have a classmate migrated to Addis Ababa who told me first about city life” [Interviewee 7, age 22].Therefore, the research participants had some information about the city life from relatives and friends who had left their original rural areas before.
Mobile Communication

The other way to get the information about city life was through phone communication with their family members. For instance, one of the respondents said “every time my brother called me and he inspired me to join him which distorted my attention on focusing my education”[Interviewee 5, age 19].

Holy Cross’ or Meskel Holyday Celebration

Meskel was one of the public holidays highly celebrated among the Wolaytan ethnic groups. Meskel is also considered as a beginning of New Year to Wolaytans. Therefore, this holiday was also used as a favorable ground to disseminate information regarding the city life and enabled the youth to migrate from their rural areas. One of the point which initiated the youth residing in the rural area to decide to migrate was the material possession of the migrant youths who had migrated before them. They brought new clothes for their families, mobile apparatus and sometimes motor bikes.

For instance, one of the participants said “after I had noticed the expensive clothes my friend wore during Meskel celebration, I decided to migrate to Addis Ababa” [Interviewee 3, age 18]. The other respondent said “a migrant in our neighbor provided his families with various materials and when he came for Meskel celebration’so, this motivated to follow his footsteps” [Interviewee 1, age 17].

The focus group discussant reported that they got information about the city life from their senior migrants. According to the focus group discussants, ‘our friends, family members and those who had left the community before told us worth of living in the city during Meskel celebrations for which the youths of the village followed their footsteps.’

Perceptions of Migrant Youths about City Life

According to the interviewee, the picture they had about the city life was exaggerated as compared with the facts on the ground. According to them, before they came to Addis Ababathey thought that life was easy. They were convinced that they could earn much sum of money. However, after their arrival, life became difficult until they sorted out their own solutions. One of the respondents said “before I came here, I thought it was very easy to make money and live a better life but the reality taught me the difficulty of earning good sum of money”[Interviewee 6, age 20]. The participants further mentioned that the living cost in city was a challenge for saving the small amount of money they earned. One of the interviewee said “Even if you get the money, you spend it for your need which makes saving difficult” [Interviewee 3, age 18]. The interviewees revealed that getting access to basic services like education, health and employment was not as easy as they had perceived before their migration. One of the interviewee said “before I came here I thought it was easy to get basic services like education, health and employment opportunities in companies. However, after I had come here, I could not get any regular job and since I struggled a lot to survive, I could not pursue my education by quitting work” [Interviewee 1, age 17].

The interviewees mentioned that not having educational qualification become an obstacle for their employment opportunity. One of the interviewee said “since I do not have the educational qualification most organizations demand, I could not get good job” [Interviewee 4, age 21]. Furthermore, the interviewees revealed that inability to do business as the license is not given for individuals lived less than five years exposed them to the chases of police officers as long as doing any business on street is prohibited legally. To get license, in addition to length of year lived; they had to fulfill some requirements that they could not meet. One of the respondents said “the police officer chased us while doing business on the street and to get license, it requires tedious procedures which was also difficult sometimes for the residents to fulfill” [Interviewee 4, age 22]. The interviewees mentioned the difficulty of pursuing their education that they had abandoned. One of the respondent said “before my arrival, I thought continuing my education was as simple compared with the situation in my village, but after my arrival I have learned the difficulty of continuing my education” [Interviewee 2, age 16]. Despite the difficulties, they faced during hard times; the research participants preferred their life in the city to rural areas. They developed self-efficacy that they believed through hard work and dedication to their life become well in the future. One of the respondents said “the
life I am leading now was not as I thought before my departure but through time I can improve my life situations’’ [Interviewee 7, age 22].

The focus group discussants elaborated that before they come to Addis Ababa, they had perceived that life was easy in order to meet their needs as compared to their former places of residences but after their arrival, they have learned that the life in the city was not as they thought it to be. Though the focus group discussant believed that the life they were living had challenges, it was far better than the life they had lived before and still they hope through time they can improve their life circumstances because they have a firm belief that their current places are better to improve one’s life. According the discussants ‘’their current life circumstances were not as they had perceived before their departure but they hope life in city will become better in the future.’’

- Migrants Life Satisfaction in the City

According to the research participants, they were happy with their current life circumstances because they could fulfill for their food, cloth, and other things independently. They reported that even if they did not earn enough amount of money to meet everything they need but believe they were leading modest life after their arrival in the city.

- Independence

The interviewee reported that they were satisfied with their current life circumstances. One of the satisfactions they get from was their sense of independence. For instance, one of the respondents said ‘’I am very happy because I am able to provide my need independently’’ [Interviewee 3, age 18].

- Earning Money

The research participant got satisfaction they drove from earning money through their own ways. They referred that small money earned through individual effort gave them high satisfaction. Based on their current assessment, they hope that they will earn large sum of money in the future. One of the research participants said ‘’now I don’t ask anyone to give me money because now I know how to make money’’ [Interviewee 7, age 22].

- Less Worry

The research also revealed that they outh ability to earn money independently helped in easing the level of worrisome. One of the respondent said ‘’I don’t have much worry for my basic needs as before since I am learning to live my own way’’ [Interviewee 4, age 21].

- Happiness

The youths’ ability to lead their own life on their own ways created feelings of happiness. The happiness the youths drive comes from their sense of independence due to their abilities to make money. One of the respondent said ‘’I am very happy about my current life’’ [Interviewee 6, age 20]. For instance, another respondents said ‘’I am not living as my friends told me but it is a good life compared with my past life’’ [Interviewee 5, age 19].

The focus group discussion held with the participants also revealed that the migrants were satisfied with their life circumstances in comparing with their past life coupled with strong sense of hope it would hold in the future. They replied that they had been unable to meet their basic needs before but after their migration, they were able to meet the necessities. Their ability to meet their basic needs and their improved life circumstances created sense of satisfaction. For instance, during the focus group interview, it was reported that ‘’they were satisfied with their current living standard’’ Moreover, the discussant further revealed that they were satisfied because they now believe that they can achieve more in the future. The discussant said ‘’they know ways to handle challenges after their migration.’’ The other point they revealed was that ‘’you
can change the hardship in city but the hardship in rural area will not change even if you stay for a long period of time.”

- **Migrant Youths Experiences of Life in City in Comparison with the Rural**

  The interview participants revealed that life in rural areas was difficult as compared with life in urban areas.

  o **Inability to Get Accesses to Basic Social Services**

    The interviewees reported that basic social services were not available in rural areas as in the city. They reported their families were not capable of affording minimum cost required for basic social services. According to the interviewee, they feel abandoned by everyone due to their inability to get access to basic social services. The public services like education, health care, and transportation are very difficult to access and even if they were available in their community, they pointed out that they did not have the capacity to afford it. One of the respondent said “living in the rural area was very difficult because you could not get basic services that you need to achieve your dream” [Interviewee 3, age 18]. Another interviewee said “my families are not capable of paying entrance fee for my education and they could not afford to buy school uniform” [Interviewee 7, age 22]. One of the respondents said “in our family if I got sick no one would take me to health centers because they [his parents] do not have money to pay for registration and drug. Even if the money requested was small, they could not afford it” [Interviewee 5, age 19]. The other respondent said “in city, you can lead healthy life because you can wash your clothes regularly, you drink pure water and get shower as you need, but in rural area to get all these facilities are difficult” [Interviewee 2, age 16].

  o **Inability to Hold Land**

    The interview participant reported that their parents could not give them land since they do not have enough land for themselves. One of the respondent said “my families work on the farms of other people because they do not have their own land. So why should I stay there if I did not have opportunity to hold land” [Interviewee 1, age 17]. Another interviewee said “my father didn’t have land to give me, then how can I make my own livelihood if I don’t have a land to plough” [Interviewee 7, age 22].

  o **Less Business Opportunity**

    The other major difference between living in the rural area and in city, according to the participants, was that, they could make a good deal of money in the city they could not be able to make it in the rural area. For instance, one of the participants said “if you want to work shoe shining in rural area, there was no one who needs this services but in the city you can make money as most people take it as a way of life” [Interviewee 6, age 20]. Another interviewee said “in city, you can make money through various ways whereas in rural areas ways of getting money are very limited” [Interviewee 4, age 21].

  o **Less Employment Opportunity**

    According to the participants, the other difference between city life and of the rural areas was that there were very limited employment opportunities as compared to the city. They reported that there was no job created and the government gives less attention to rural youths. One of the respondent said “in city, you have a wide range of opportunity ranging from informal sector to formal sectors which are not available in the rural areas” [Interviewee 3, age 18]. Another interviewee said “in city, employment opportunity was in abundance” [Interviewee 2, age 16]. Other interview respondent said “if you work hard in the city, you can get employed easily while this was difficult in rural” [Interviewee 1, age 17]. Furthermore, one of the interviewee said “trying to achieving dreams in the rural area is like pushing mountain with a hand” [Interviewee 5, age 19].

    The focus group interview also revealed that life in rural area was difficult for the majority of the youth since there was little job opportunity if any and enough jobs was not created to prevent the youths from
migration. The focus group interview further revealed that the amount of land the families own was not enough to secure enough food for households and to generate extra incomes. Moreover, the discussant revealed that the opportunities were limited in rural. In the middle of the focus group interview, the discussant emphasized the disadvantage of not migrating. They elaborated that through migration, one can improve his/her living standard.

Regarding achieving dream by living in the rural area, they replied that living in city was far better for fulfilling ones dream. Therefore, migration is taken as the only and best solution they have at their hand to achieve their dreams. According to the focus group discussant, they provided two reasons why living in city was better than in rural. They were living in higher standard of living as compared with their life in their former rural areas and they hoped that they would have better life in the future.

- **Life Experiences of Migrant Youths in the City**

According to the research participants, the living standard in the city was better as compared with previous areas [rural area]. They believe that after they had come to Addis Ababa their lives were improved. The interview participants reported that they were able to do anything they wished on their own limits. For instance, one of the respondents said “I don’t have enough cloth when I am in rural area. So now I do have clothes” [Interviewee 2, age 16]. Another said “when I was living there, sometimes I did not get enough food, but now since I work, I can get food” [Interviewee 4, age 21]. In addition to that other interviewee said “at least I can do anything in my own limit for making a living” [Interviewee 7, age 22]. Still other interviewee said “I get the money from my job to lead my own life” [Interviewee 3, age 18]. Moreover, the interviewees believed that their life standard was improved after they had come to Addis Ababa.

The focus group discussants also confirmed the improvement on their lives after they had migrated from the rural. When they talk about their life standard, frequently they compared it with their previous life in the rural areas. They considered their ability to work and make money as a big deal and providing for their own need was seen as paradigm shift in their life. They believe that their lives were improved after migration though they still believed they were passing challenging times in city. Generally, the discussant referred that, after their migration, they were able to independently fulfill their own need to the extent that they do not tend to expect any help from others.

- **Challenges Faced by Migrant Youths**

According to the participants, they went through many difficulties after they had come to the city. However, through perseverance and struggle, they were improving their living standards. Looking back to their migration, they recollected their memories of the hardship they encountered. The first challenge they encountered was the newness to the city life that confused them. One of the interviewee respondents said “while you were changing living place it takes some time until you adjust to the new environment” [Interviewee 1, age 17]. Even another respondent said “the city is big and I do not know whom to communicate with to get a job” [Interviewee 2, age 16]. Other interviewee said “Addis Ababa is a big city which I had ever seen before and everything confused me a lot” [Interviewee 7, age 22]. The interviewee participant revealed that the migrant become sick as their strangers to this new environment. For instance, one of the respondents said “I got ill several times since my arrival” [Interviewee 6, age 20]. The other challenge they faced was their inability to find places to start up business. The respondents reported that police officers do not allow them to work on the streets. The participant further mentioned that the hostile reception of the people working before them. For instance, one of the participants said “after I had come here, it became difficult to find a place to work” [Interviewee 5, age 19].

The other challenge they encountered was finding license to start up their small scale businesses. Due to inability to get license, they were forced to work illegally. One of the respondents said “the police officers chased us since we do not have legal licenses since we do not fulfill the requirements but we do not have other choices other than continuing to work on the streets” [Interviewee 4, age 21].
interviewee respondents said “I could get good amount of money but the living cost was expensive which makes me unable to save” [Interviewee 3, age 18]. Finally, they reported that they were not getting supports from the government bodies in organizing, training, and empowering them. They revealed that getting support from the government officials in creating suitable ground for empowering us will contribute a great deal for countries human resource development.

The focus group discussion revealed that the migrants faced a wide range of challenges after their arrival. The inability to find a place to work, absence of support from government officials, expensive living cost and the exploitations by individuals doing illegal businesses were mentioned among major challenges they encountered after their arrivals. FGD participants emphasized lack of support from the stakeholders in empowering them. In the middle of the discussion, this idea was raised most “we could not get loan or any other services rather we struggle by our own”. The other idea mentioned several times in the middle of the discussion was that ‘no one gives us support especially the government bodies in strengthening our capacity’. At last, the greatest challenge they were facing after their arrivals was that they were forced to be involved in illegal business networks by powerful gangs of the city. The research report revealed that these individuals forced the youth to transport drug, facilitate commercial sex workers and selling drugs. One of the respondents in the discussion said “one of the drug lord came and forced me to give some drug for the people waiting in other corner of the city”. The respondents added that if they refused to cooperate with these individuals, they would be harassed to the point that they could not do their jobs.

- **Future Life Orientation of Migrant Youths**

Most of the research participants revealed that they had positive hope for the future. As to them, they did not deny the hardship they were facing in city, but still hoped to overcome it through hard work. They have positive beliefs in improving their living standard in the future. The interviewees revealed that continuing to live in the rural will not change their living situations. After they had come to the city, they were taking lessons on how to improve their living standards. One of the respondents said “I am learning a lot of things on ways of making good living” [Interviewee 3, age 18]. They reported that their current living standard was low but they believed that they would improve it in the near future. The data revealed that the participants have big dreams to achieve a lot in the future. One of the participants said “in the future I want to open mobile shop” [Interviewee 5, age 19].Another said “after making money I want to return and open up big retail shop in the rural” [Interviewee 1, age 17 22].Besides, another interviewee said” with help of God I know I can buy a business car in the future” [Interviewee 7, age 22].And one respondent said “I want to finish my education and want to get job” [Interviewee 3, age 18]. According to the participant, they insisted on saving, pursuing education and working hard as outlets to their future better lives. They believed that if they work hard, it is realistic to achieve their dreams in the city than in rural. They believed that the current challenges they were facing was simple as compared with their future achievement and even they said they had managed many challenges since the day they arrived to the city. For instance, one of the respondents said “I am sick after I had come but no one was here to help but now I have social networks to get help” [Interviewee 5, age 19]. Another interviewee said “if you are in need of money no one lends you but now I can lend from different people through my acquaintance. This shows me that every challenge I am facing will change and I will achieve great things in my life” [Interviewee 7, age 22].Another interview respondent said “when I came here everything was difficult to achieve but now at least I am doing my own business and in the future I will continue to improve myself” [Interviewee 4, age 21]. According to the interview report, the youths believe they can overcome the current challenges and improve their living standards.

During the focus group discussion, the discussants reported that their future hold better living standards as compared with their current and previous life circumstances. They reported that they were going through many challenges since their arrival but through time, it became possible to change their current circumstances. They reported that their previous life was full of challenges but now they can plan and can achieve their dreams through time. According to the discussants, the future holds better condition in the city than rural. They reported that living in cities like Addis Ababa was an avenue for positive change.
4. Discussion

This study investigated youth migrants life experiences in Addis Ababa. The study mainly gave much emphasis for rural-urban type of migration where taking the departure point from Wolayta rural areas and the destination place was Addis Ababa. Moreover, the research investigated the life experience of the migrant youths in the destination point along with the process of youths migration, their perception of city life, challenges they faced after they arrived to Addis Ababa, and their future life orientations. In this section, I will discuss the finding of the study in relation to the existing theories and research findings.

The work of Deshingkarand Grimm (2005) outlined that the major causes of internal migration into two broad categories: the ‘push’ and ‘pull’. The ‘push’ factors are mostly related with the declining opportunities in agriculture. They list out surplus of labor arising from scarcity of cultivated land, inequitable land distribution, low agricultural productivity, high population density and the concentration of the rural economy almost exclusively on agriculture frequently lead to an increase in outmigration. The current study also confirms that the major cause for youths migration from rural area were mainly poverty, small land holding, large family size, unmet needs.

Charlotte Min-Harris (2010) referred the rural youth as most affected by poverty. He further noted that the rural youth are the most disadvantaged groups in the form of limited access to educational program that address their specific needs. The current study confirmed that the youth in rural area of Wolayta preferred to migrate to the city due to limited access in their neighborhood. The finding revealed that the youths have problem in getting daily food, cloth and other necessities which were very essential for their survival. Moreover, parents’ refusal to help them in continuing their education and to get medical treatment due to poverty forced them to run away from their community. The study of Adepoju (2008) strengthens the current study stating poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS pandemic are the contributing factors for migration in sub-Saharan Africa.

The present study also revealed that the youths migrate from Wolayta rural area to Addis Ababa because due to hardships. The participant pointed out that their migration to the city was initiated due to lack of access in various domains in their life that puts migration as the only viable option for them. According to the data, the migrant youth came from large family, which makes the family unable to provide even the smallest needs of the youth, which in return upsets the youth and forces them to migrate to the city in search of better life. The research participant also mentioned that their inability to possess a land that was an important resource to depend on rural area was also an important factor for their migration. At the moment, the household could not provide this resource [land] for the youth because of the small amount they possess and large family size they have. The finding of the current study aligns with the literature that reveals that rural youth are particularly disadvantaged (Van Dijk, Fransen, 2008, Ezva, and Kiros, 2001).

Charlotte Min-Harris (2010) and Fransen (2009) further noted that most migrant face low-wage employment, unemployment, underemployment, poverty, drugs, and crime in the city. The youth in the current study could not get employed since they do not have adequate skill and educational qualification. Some of the youth also get involved in illegal business forcefully that this in the future may become the livelihood of the youth in facilitating the ground for crime. The study revealed that the youth after migration did not continued their study due to their inability to pay and lack of determination to do so. This confirms the contention by Toury (2006) which claims that migrant youth face a future of low-wage employment, underemployment, poverty, drugs and crime. This means the youth become unskilled individuals in the future, which exacerbate their ability to get employed in developing urban labor. To become productive member of the society, the youth should invest their large time in skill development and education rather than spending their time in job that do not facilitate their personal growth.

In the finding of the current study, small land holding by family left the youth landless and the relatively large family size was found out to be the major cause for outmigration from rural which aligns with the finding of Acharya (2003) which states population pressure and land fragmentation was also referred as playing critical role in outmigration of rural youths. This was manifested in having little access to land in a predominantly agrarian society that leaves the landless with few alternatives to migration. In various studies,
Wolayta has always been associated with high population. Travelers who passed by the area in the first decade of the twentieth century spoke of dense settlements and crowded markets (Desalegn, 2007). The finding of the current study also was supported by Desalegn (2007) which states Wolayta family land holdings have been growing smaller through the decades and in recent years this was compounded by growing landlessness, especially among the youth. According to Afsar and Gazdar (2003), urbanization has been a major driver of internal migration in many countries and has overtaken other factors in many Asian locations. In the current study, likewise, the youths migrate to gain new experiences of life and their desire to get new skills in urbanized areas.

The current study also revealed that the migrant youth could not get suitable school for their education due to financial incapability and accommodation problems. This is confirmed by the study by Van Blerk (2007) which shows that 13% of the girls and 21% of the boys of the study participants do not attend school. If the youth continue in doing what they are doing currently in their precious time, in the near future they will face difficulty to integrate within urban life. The current study aligns with the finding of Guest (2003) high rates of migration into urbanized areas have continued despite rising level of (formal) unemployment and persistent urban poverty. The explanation lies in the expanding urban informal sectors which the current study indicated that though the youth did not found formal employment, they still continue in involving informal sectors. They continue living in poverty but in a better living condition than the rural area.

The study Mosse et al. (2002) argue that whether or not migration is poverty reducing, it is a tough undertaking. Migrants travel and live in very difficult conditions. In the study, conducted on India, migrants work long hours in harsh conditions; injuries are common and there is inadequate medical assistance or compensation. In addition, other study revealed that water, fuel, sanitation and security are the major problems. Over half the migrants slept in the open and the rest had very perfunctory accommodation (Mosse et al., 2002). The current study showed that migrant youths were not living in conducive environment. They were not capable of engaging themselves in skill development education rather than working in low profile small informal job.

In the study of Narayan and Petsch (2002), migrants spoke about the high levels of insecurity faced. Rickshaw pullers lose their rickshaws if they are late with rental payments, factory workers may be fired immediately if they miss a day of work, as others can replace them immediately. Though the current study participant were not employed in the formal sectors but the youth face harassment from illegal gangs in forcing them to involve illegal business due to this they feel high level of insecurity.

Several studies show that migrants face higher costs of living at the destination. A study conducted in Baroda city in Gujarat (Mosse et al., 2002) estimated that 56 per cent of migrants interviewed spent more than 75 per cent of their income on food; and another 74 per cent spend 40 per cent of their income on other expenses including fuel, soap, tea, medicines. The participants of the current study also reported that the high level of living cost was challenge for not saving money they earn from informal sectors.

The research further revealed that the type of life the youth are living in the city is not better compared within the city standard and was not the same as they thought it to be before their migration. The study conducted by Charlotte Min-Harris (2010) and many others supported this notion. In my stay with the participants, inability to attend education and get employment was not seen as problem since they were comparing it with their pervious life circumstances, which gave them life satisfaction and enabled them to think in a better living standard than before. In reality, it is difficult to say their life was improved since they were not engaging in a domain, which helped them to develop in the future. During interview, they replied that they escaped the hardship of rural areas that holds them back like their inability to go to school but after their arrival they did not start their education but fantasize to have a better life in future. In my view, if they could not engage in developing themselves via education and skill development rather than continuing the job that do not require them to be skillful, at last they could migrate from city to rural area because of inability to meet the requirements in the city or they would become burden to the city. Currently, the youth were very happy of current life through comparing with their past life which hindered their motivation to growth. In my view, this happiness and satisfaction could not last long because at the end of the day they
realize that life in city becomes difficult due to their inability to meet the criteria to live in city. At other hand, the rural area was becoming in short supply of labor that also further makes life complication due to short supply of labor in rural area and leaving the old age population without any one who looks after them. Since the migrants were happy with their life in city, it is more probable that they will attract large number of youths from their community in the near future. These youth migrated to city could not become essential labor force to the labor demand of the city since they do not have the educational qualification and the skills required. Moreover, they are not engaging themselves in skill development and education after their arrival in city.

5. Conclusion

The current study investigated youth migration from rural area of Wolayta rural to Addis Ababa. In the study, the major cause and process of migration, youth perception of city life, and their future life orientation was discussed.

According to the study, poverty, small land holding, large family size, unmet needs and aspiration of city life was the prime cause for the youth migration from Wolayta rural areas. In the study, the participants gave much emphasis on their ambition of better life as the reason of abandonment of their original rural areas. In line with this, inability of the families to meet the youths need including basic needs have been found to be a reason in migration. Regarding their city life, participants replied that they were happy with current life situation and consider their living standard higher than earlier periods. The research had found out these happiness and satisfaction as an obstacle to the youths personal development. Since the youths did not continued their education and engaged in skill development that helps for easy employability in the city. If they could not get the necessary skill and education, they could not contribute to labor needs of the city. Furthermore, these youth were capturing the attention of the drug gangs as an outlet to carry on their duties of illegal business. Though the youths in the current study have optimistic views about their future life, if not handled appropriately through creating opportunity that would turn them productive sooner turns them to losers. The point that needs to be given due emphasis was that the youths satisfaction in their current life without any skill and education should be considered as a problem not as a good sign of change. Finally, the research found out that it is not the luxury in the city that pulls the youth the most but it is the hardship they encountered in their day to day life in rural areas which forces them to decide migration as an only viable option. If given due emphasis for the rural youth in job creation and skill development, it was beneficial not only for the youth but also for the country at large.

6. Recommendations

← Young people are integral to reducing extreme poverty and hunger in developing countries. They can act as ambassadors of rural development and provide innovative ideas when crafting development policies. In this context, policymakers, as development specialists, must promote an earnest paradigm shift in the way they shape poverty reduction efforts, fully engage, and empower young people to diminish the cycle of poverty in rural livelihoods. Through

1. Promoting youth’s capabilities to stay on the land through agricultural/environmental education and national service;

2. Expanding resources and programs for social services, primarily in education and health care; and

3. Engaging youth perspectives when evaluating progress achieved in addressing poverty issues.

← Rural youth need the means to stay in their communities with the opportunity to improve their livelihoods. As agriculture is one of the most promising sectors for rural youth employment, governments must prioritize investments and programs in irrigation, water resource management, and improved
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agricultural practices in order to expand young rural farmers’ capabilities to produce food and conserve the land’s natural resources while providing them with the skills and abilities to increase their rural incomes.

Government and stakeholders required to design schemes in skill training that fills the skill demands of newly established industries in Addis Ababa and outskirts of Addis Ababa.

Government and relevant stakeholders are required designing programs that encourage migrant youths educational ambitions.

Developing system that easily facilitates accommodation in the city for migrant youths in order to make easy permanent settlement in the city which encourages integration among various ethnic groups.

Banking sectors should devise strategies that encourage migrant youths saving habit and lending money that helps in job creation.

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