The Effect of Women's Employment on Marriage Formation: The case of rural women in Sebeta Hawas District, Central Ethiopia. (Aynalem Megersa[1], Workneh Negatu[2], and Eshetu Gurmu[3])

1. Introduction

The relationship between women's work and marriage is a widely studied issue. However, much of the literature focuses on the experiences of women in the western countries (see Kuo & Raley, 2014; Lichter et al., 1992), and is in some cases a comparative cross national research in its nature (Ono, 2003). Case studies from developing countries, especially Sub Saharan Africa, tend to be scanty in the body of literature. This little attention is primarily attributed to the fact that women's employment in the region is related to subsistence agriculture where women primarily engage in unpaid family work in addition to their homemaking responsibilities. Though this pattern is still a fact, women are increasingly improving their market share in the income-earning employment (self-employment and wage employment) over time. For example, looking at the national statistics for Ethiopia (FDRE, 2005; CSA, 2011b), while only 26.8 percent of women were engaged in income-earning activities in 1994, this figure has increased to 59.6 percent in 2007. The statistics also shows that the increasing trend of women's participation during the aforementioned period is attributed to the tremendous increase observed in the figure among rural women than urban women.

This increasing women's participation in income earning activities is attributed to the Ethiopian government's increasing attention on job creation for the citizens in general and women in particular in its effort to alleviate poverty. The current five years development plan, for example, identified "creating employment opportunities" among the major pillar strategies for enhancing sustainable development in the country (MOFED, 2010). The promotion of the development of micro and small enterprise sector and the labour intensive industries are among the two key strategic directions set in the different development plans to absorb agriculturally under-employed labour and diversify the sources of income for farming families. Following the export promotion strategy put in place in the country, non-traditional export industries such as floriculture and garment industries have flourished. Despite the fact that flower business is a new export venture for Ethiopia as compared to other African countries (e.g., Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Uganda), Ethiopia has increasingly

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improved its market share over time. Ethiopia is the fifth largest non-EU exporter to the EU cut-flower market and the second largest (after Kenya) flower exporter from Africa since 2007 (Mulu & Iizuka, 2010). The industry is one of the key labour intensive industries which has increased employment opportunities for rural women (mostly unskilled or semi-skilled), especially in the central part of the country.

In Ethiopia, marriage has a special and highly valued place in the family system and its symbolic significance as a marker of prestige and personal achievement is very strong. It is a relationship that requires individuals to meet culturally specified obligations, including meeting the social, emotional, and material needs of spouses and children. Given the fact that the social norm in the rural Ethiopia exclusively gives women domestic responsibilities and underplays their income earning activities, especially outside home, the recent increase in women's employment would have a far reaching social impact. Women's employment is commonly emphasized among the key factors affecting different aspects of marriage including entry into marital union, marital relationships, and marital stability. This is primarily because employment structures people's life styles and is the major source of socioeconomic status. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to examine the effects of women's employment (both wage employment and self-employment) on timing of entry into marital union among women in productive age group residing in Sebeta Hawas district, Central Ethiopia.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

The study is informed by the arguments of socio-economic theories of marriage. The socioeconomic theories primarily constitute two main theories: Theory of specialization and exchange and Oppenheimer's theory of marriage timing. These theories have had the greatest impact in explaining the variations in both the timing and overall rates of marriage in recent decades. The important feature of the socioeconomic theories is that they link the great turnaround in women's increased access to resources (e.g., education, employment, etc.) in recent decades more precisely to demographic phenomena such as marriage dissolution and marriage formation (the subject under analysis here). In addition, these theories establish clear working hypotheses that make it possible to operationalise the key variables. As can be drawn from the explanation presented below, both theories hypothesize that women's employment delays marriage timing.

The cornerstone of the argument of the theory of specialization and exchange is role specialization. Traditionally, the man devotes himself solely to the job market and the woman to household tasks, mainly childrearing and home making. This sexual division of work in the family was based on the idea that men prepared themselves more for the job market and women more for the home. The significance of sex role specialization has both sociological and economic foundation. From the sociological point of view, the sex role specialization is best elaborated by the work of Parsons (1949), who argued that sex-role segregation is a functional necessity for marital stability in our society and even for the viability of the society itself. This is so, Parsons maintained, because sex-role segregation is the most important mechanism preventing disruptive competition between husband and wife. From the economic point of view, the significance of gender-segregated economic roles stressing the importance of women's "traditional" roles of mothers and homemakers is strongly echoed in the Becker's economic theory of the family (Becker, 1981). Becker basically views unmarried men and women as potential trading partners. A couple marries (trades) because each partner has more to gain by marrying (trading) than by remaining single (not trading). As in all trading relationships, the gains to marriage are based on each person's having something different to trade. Becker goes on to argue that "the gain from marriage is reduced by a rise in the earnings and labor force participation of women and by a fall in fertility because a sexual division of labor becomes less advantageous" (Becker, 1981: 248). Presumably, this is claimed to be a major factor in the recent rise in the age at marriage and divorce rate in the western countries (Becker et al., 1977).

Oppenheimer's (1988) theory of marriage timing suggests that women's economic independence lead to a delay in marriage and denies that women's access to employment results in a decrease in final tendency to marry. This theory unfolds on two levels, namely the *preference aspect* and the *opportunity aspect*. Regarding the preferences, the marriage timing theory implies that women's economic independence has caused marriage strategies to change. Women wait longer to marry. This occurs, because women wait until they are well placed in the job market in order to have a better idea of their socioeconomic characteristics and to opt for a better partnering or, at least, for a partner who fits their lifestyle. As a result, many employed women prefer to wait rather than marry earlier. Regarding the opportunity aspect of marriage, the marriage timing theory argues that not only do employed women prefer to marry later, but, in addition, they cannot marry earlier because of the young people's greater job precariousness. Job instability delays marriage timing as it, on the one hand,

makes it impossible to know the socioeconomic characteristics of potential spouses until sometime passes, delaying the process of selecting a partner with a view toward marriage. On the other hand, it makes it tremendously difficult to provide for a new family group, independently of the families of origin, due to a lack of economic solvency.

3. Methods

3.1 Data collection

A survey, entitled "*Sebeta Hawas District Women's Employment, Marriage, and Empowerment Survey*", was designed and implemented (March-July 2014) to generate a range of quantitative data. The data capture both household level and individual women's characteristics. All women in economically active age group at the time of the survey (15-59 years) residing in selected rural *kebeles*[4] of Sebeta Hawas District are eligible for the study.

This study is based in Sebeta Hawas District of Oromia Regional State, Central Ethiopia, where significant majority of the recent industries that have created unprecedented paid employment opportunities outside home for the rural women in the country have been opened up. For example, about 97.3% of the flower farms, the major employer of rural women, operating in the country are located in Oromia Region.[5] Among the seven clusters in Oromia Region[6], the highest number of farms (33.33%) that were established before 2006 are located in the Sebeta cluster, where the study was conducted. Hence, focusing on the Sebeta cluster would increase the chance of getting women who have worked for a longer period of time as compared to the other clusters in the region.

Sebeta Hawas District is administratively divided into 42 rural *kebeles* at the time of the survey A multi stage sampling was followed to select a total of 5 sample rural *kebeles* for the study. Sample households from each *kebeles* were selected using Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) systematic sampling technique; size being number of households obtained from the list of household registration obtained from the health posts of the respective *kebeles* considered in the study. Accordingly, a total of 900 households (33%) were randomly selected, of which 846 households (94.0 percent) were visited during the fieldwork and successfully interviewed. It was not possible to get valid information from 54 households due to not finding mature person to give full information about the household despite repeated

[4] *Kebele* is the lowest administrative level in Ethiopia.
[5] Source: own calculation from the data obtained from EHPEA.
[6] There are seven clusters identified in oromia region for floriculture development. These are the Awash, Debrezeit, Holeta, Koka, Sebeta, Sendafa, and Sululta clusters. Majority of the flower farms in the Sebeta cluster are found in the Sebeta Hawas *district*.

visits, while 6 households refused to cooperate with the interviewers. In the 846 households successfully interviewed, the survey identified a total of 1176 women aged between 15 and 59 years which were considered eligible for the study, of which 1066 women (90.6 percent) were interviewed during the fieldwork.

Analysis of a dynamic phenomenon like transition from being single to marriage requires a longitudinal or retrospective survey and application of a dynamic technique. Life history calendar was used to collect complete retrospective information regarding each woman's migration, marriage, childbirth, and employment history that is required in the analysis. Additionally, a household questionnaire and individual woman questionnaire were used to collect household profile and individual woman characteristics, respectively. All women interviewed during the field work (both ever and never married women) were included in the analysis, as the main objective of this study is to assess the risk of first marriage. Additionally, a combination of six key informant interviews, 14 in-depth interviews and three focus group discussions were held to collect qualitative data that was used to supplement the quantitative findings.

The dynamic analysis of the marriage rate was applied by means of the event history analysis technique using the Kaplan Meier plots and survival function, a non-parametric descriptive method, and multivariate models.

3.2 Modelling

The multivariate analysis employs a discrete-time event history approach (Allison 1984). Specifically, the study applied a discrete-time logit regression model (Yamaguchi, 1987) by constructing a person-year file containing 8,805 records, based on the marital experiences of the 765 ever married women. Observation begins when a woman turns age 10 and ends with the event of first marriage or the date of the interview, if the woman had not ever married.

The hazard rate of the event of interest (marriage), $\lambda_{it,}$ is defined as the conditional probability that a woman i will enter into first marriage at time t, given that the woman has not already entered into first marriage prior to time t.

$$\lambda_{it} = \Pr(T_i = t | T \geq t), \quad t = 10, 11, 12, \dots, 59 \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, n$$

In the event history analysis, the event indicator (binary response variable) can be analysed using a discrete-time multivariate logit model expressed by the equation (Yamaguchi, 1987):

$$\text{logit}(\lambda_{(it},X) = \log\left(\frac{\lambda_{it}}{1-\lambda_{it}}\right) = \alpha + \beta' X_{it}, \qquad t = 10,11,12,\ldots,59 \quad i = 1,2,\ldots,n$$

where

α = constant term

β' = a vector of coefficients associated with the covariates. An individual coefficient (β) shows the effect of a 1 unit change in the associated covariate x on the log-odds of an event in the interval t.

X_{it} = a vector of covariates (which may be either fixed or time-varying)

The parameters in the model are estimated using maximum likelihood estimation (Tuma et al., 1979), which allows estimation of parameters with censored events included in the analysis.

3.3 Data inputs

Dependent variable

The dependent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether a marital union has been formed between the beginning and end of each yearly observation period since the age of 10. It is coded 0 prior to first marriage and 1 in the first year of marriage. Age 10 was taken as a starting point because some of the respondents reported that they got married for the first time when they were 10 years old.

Independent variable

The independent variable for this analysis is the employment type of the women. This variable is treated as a time-varying covariate, measured at each year since age 10 and has three possible response categories, namely non-income earning, paid employment and self-employment. For each of these categories a dummy variable was created and non-income earning category was used a reference category. Based on arguments of the socioeconomic theories discussed above, it is expected that women who are employed (self-employed or paid employed) are more likely to delay their first marriage transition compared to those who are not earning income.

Control Variables

We included different demographic and socio-economic variables that vary on either a monthly or yearly basis in the model to control for their effects on the age at first marriage in the analysis of the effect of employment on marriage formation. The control variables included in the analysis are: educational attainment, birth cohort, migration status, parental

characteristics, policy period (pre and post 1993[7]), membership in women's/youth association, ethnicity (Oromo and non-Oromo), religion (orthodox, Non-Orthodox), and place of residence (*kebele*). The two parental characteristics included in the model are childhood family structure when respondents were at age 14 years (biological parents living together or not) and educational level of the respondent's most highly educated parent (No education, primary education and secondary and above education).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Results of the study show that a total of 765 (71.8 percent) of the sample women considered in the study have ever married with a median age at first marriage of 16.0 years (SD 3.7). The median age at first marriage for women in the study area was found to be slightly lower than the regional and national averages of age at first marriage, which are 16.9 years and 16.5 years, respectively (CSA, 2011a: 64). The study also reveals that women in the study area, on average, got married two years earlier than the legal marital age of 18 years stipulated in the Ethiopian family law. The age at first marriage ranges between 10 and 35 years indicating that there is a wide gap in timing of marriage formation. Regarding the marriage rate, although the overall marriage rate is generally high, some variation is evident among the different groups of women.

Table 1 below displays the proportion of ever married, mean and standard deviation of age at first marriage for women currently aged twenty and above. Regarding the marriage rate, although the overall marriage rate is generally high (87.9 percent), some variation is evident among the different groups of women. For example, the marriage rate for women engaged in paid employment (72.6 percent) was found to be lower compared to that of the non-income earning women (91.9 percent) or self-employed women (96.0 percent). Understandably, marriage rate varies by women's birth cohort with relatively higher proportion of older birth cohorts found to have been ever married compared to the younger birth cohorts.

Additionally, the result reveals that the proportion of ever married women tends to decrease with increase in women's educational attainment. For example, for women aged 20 and above, while almost all of the women with no education (95.4 percent) were found to be ever married, only half of women with secondary education were found to have ever married.

[7] 1993 is a year the Ethiopian government promulgated the National Women's Policy. This important policy instrument is believed to have significant effect in ensuring gender equality in the country .

Additionally, women with better educated parents were found to have lower marriage rate compared to their counterparts. Variation in marriage rate was also observed among women residing in different *kebele*s. Relatively lower marriage rate is noted among women residing in Nanno Tefki (79.5 percent) and Sebeta 05 (85.3 percent) compared to the remaining three *kebeles*.

Table 1 Table 1 Sample size, percentage distribution of ever married women, and mean age at first marriage of ever married women

Variable	N	Percentage of ever married women for women aged 20 and above	Mean age at first marriage for married women aged 20 and above (SD)
Employment category			
Non-income earning	436	91.9	16.4(3.5)
Paid employment	322	72.6	17.2(4.1)
self-employment	308	96.0	16.4(3.6)
Education			
No education	626	95.4	16.3(3.7)
first cyle primary	139	84.1	15.8(3.1)
Second cyle primary	178	73.3	17.3(3.3)
Secondary and higher	123	50.7	20.3(3.8)
Birth cohort			
1995-99	225	NA	NA
1985-94	349	73.9	16.5(3.1)
1975-84	251	96.0	16.8(4.2)
1965-74	131	99.2	16.1(4.2)
1955-64	110	100.0	16.7(3.4)
Ethnic group			
Oromo	939	88.0	16.5(3.7)
Non-Oromo	127	87.0	17.1(4.0)
Religion			
Orthodox	956	87.7	16.5(3.7)
Non-orthodox	110	89.2	17.0(3.9)
Parents' Highest education			
no education	752	90.2	16.5(3.7)
primary	251	83.1	16.6(3.7)
secondary and above	63	64.5	18.1(3.9)
Membership in women/youth association			
no	818	86.5	16.6(3.7)
yes	248	91.7	16.5(3.8)
Migration status			
Non migrant	802	87.8	16.4(3.5)
Migrant	209	88.6	16.9(4.0)
Return migrant	55	86.3	17.2(4.6)
Kebele			
Bonde	140	93.5	16.0(3.7)
Dima Manyo	99	93.9	16.1(3.3)
Haro Jila	170	95.2	16.1(3.5)
Nanno Tefki	146	79.5	15.6(3.0)
Sebeta 05	511	85.3	17.2(3.9)
TOTAL	**1066**	87.9	**16.6**(3.7)

Concerning the timing of marriage, result presented in Table 1 generally shows that marriage is relatively delayed among women engaged in paid employment, better educated women, and women having a better educated parents. For example, on average, paid employed women marry one year and 1.5 years later than non-income earning women and self-employed women, respectively. A pronounced delay in the timing of marriage is noted among women with secondary education and above who on average marry four to five years later than women with no education or first cycle primary education. Similarly, young women whose parents have no education on average marry 1.6 years earlier than those with parents having secondary and above education level. Furthermore, slight delay in marriage is noted among non-Oromo women, non-orthodox women, and women residing in Sebeta 05 k*ebele* compared to their respective counterparts.

Considering all women covered in the survey, the study in general shows that marriage rate is the highest among self-employed women (92.8 percent) followed by non-income earning women (67.9 percent) and paid employed women (56.8 percent) in that order. Further disaggregating the data, Figure 1 below shows the distribution of marriage rate (at the time of survey) among women with different employment status across different age groups.

Figure 1 Distribution of ever married women by employment type and age category

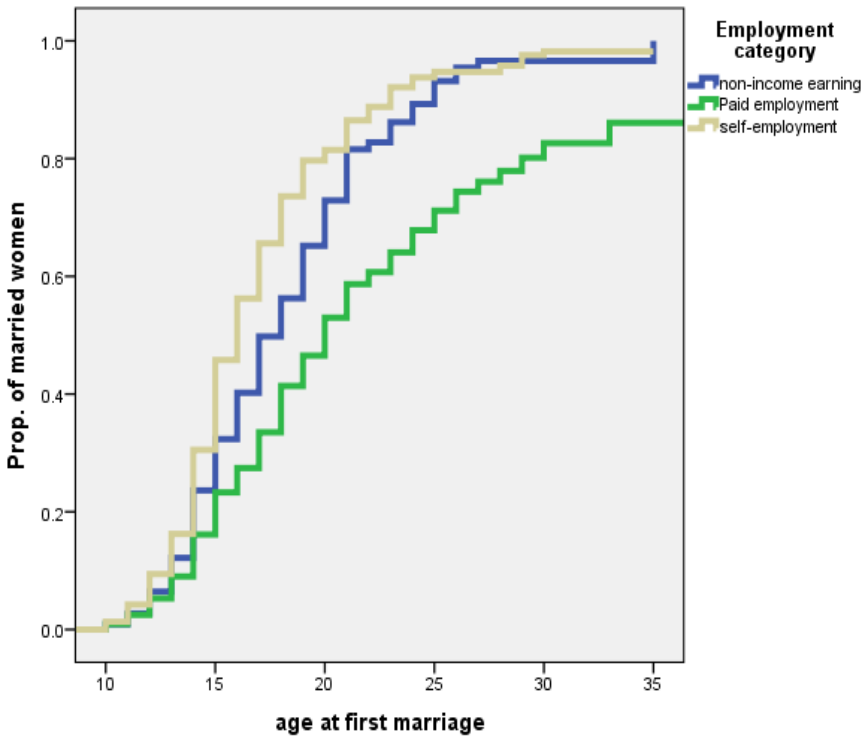
While a significant variation is noted among younger women, the variation was found to disappear for the older age group. For example, while the marriage rates for non-income earning, self-employed, and paid employed women in the age group 20-24 were found to be

59.3 percent, 78.1 percent, and 45.9 percent, respectively, the figures for all the three employment categories become well over 90 percent when women aged 30 years and above are considered. From this, it can be deduced that though women employment tends to affect the timing of marriage, it is less likely to result in definitive celibacy.

It is also important to note that marriage rate among self-employed women is the highest among the youngest age group (20-24 years). But the self-employed women are overtaken by the non-income earning women for the older age groups. For the paid employed women, however, a consistent lowest marriage rate is observed across all age groups.

The result of non-parametric descriptive analysis also suggests that the marriage rate is low among wage employed women compared to that of the non-income earning women or self-employed women. This pattern can also be easily observed from the Kaplan Meier plot shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 2 Kaplan Meier plot for hazard of first marriage by employment



4.2 Multivariate Analysis

The multivariate analysis employs a discrete-time event history approach by constructing a person-year file containing 8,805 records, based on the marital experiences of the 765 women. Observation begins when a woman turns age 10 and ends with the event of first marriage or the date of the interview, if the woman had not ever married. A discrete-time multivariate logit regression model is used to assess the effect of women's employment on

the probability of their first marriage transitions. Table 2 below reports the results from the event history analysis of the likelihood of the transition from being single to being married. The analysis is primarily used to explore whether women's employment prompts women in the study area to delay marriage, which is among important indicators of welfare for females in developing countries (Field & Ambrus, 2008).

Table 2 Result of the multivariate discrete-time logit regression estimating likelihood of transition to first marriage among never married women

	B (S.E.)	Sig.	Exp(B)
Constant	-3.79***(0.15)	.000	0.02
Employment Category			
Non_income_earning (ref)			*1.00*
Paid_employment	-0.66***(0.16)	.000	0.51
Self_employment	1.29***(0.26)	.000	3.63
Self_employment_Age	-0.14***(0.04)	.000	0.87
Education			
No education (ref)			*1.00*
Firstcycle_primary	-0.11 (0.14)	.421	0.90
secondcycle_primary	-0.80***(0.15)	.000	0.45
secondary_higher	-3.52***(0.55)	.000	0.03
secondary_higher_ Age	0.22*** (0.05)	.000	1.24
Birth Cohort			
BirthCohort1995_99	-1.40***(0.25)	.000	0.25
BirthCohort1985_94	-0.05(0.14)	.706	0.95
BirthCohort1975_84 (ref)			*1.00*
BirthCohort1965_74	0.31* (0.13)	.022	1.36
BirthCohort1955_64	0.05 (0.14)	.737	1.05
Parents' highest education			
No_education_parent (ref)			*1.00*
Primary_education_parent	0.16 (0.11)	.140	1.17
secondaryabove_education_parent	-0.22 (0.24)	.362	0.80
Migration Status			
Non Migrant (ref)			*1.00*
Migrant	0.75***(0.13)	.000	2.11
Return_migrant	0.49 (0.33)	.137	1.63
Membership in wormen's/youth assoc			
member_women_org_no (ref)			*1.00*
member_women_org_yes	0.02 (0.09)	.837	1.02
Policy Period			
Pre 1993 (ref)			*1.00*
post_1993	-0.18 (0.15)	.245	0.84
Ethnic group			
Oromo (ref)			*1.00*
Ethic_non_Oromo	-0.16 (0.14)	.246	0.85
Religion			
Orthodox (ref)			*1.00*
Religion_Non_orthodox	0.21 (0.14)	.139	1.23
Kebele			
Sebeta 05 (ref)			
Bonde	0.22 (0.13)	.089	1.25
Dima_manyo	0.01 (0.14)	.934	1.01
Haro_jila	0.32** (0.12)	.009	1.37
Nanno_tefki	0.25 (0.13)	.059	1.28
Age	0.50***(0.03)	.000	1.65

Age_square	-0.02***(0.00)	.000	0.98
Total Years of Observation	8805		
Total First Marriage Events	765		
-2 Log likelihood	4427.777		
Model Chi-square			
Other Model Summary	Cox & Snell R Square (0.084); Nagelkerke R Square (0.19)		
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test	(Chi-square 8.81; d.f 8, Sig =0.359)		

* p <0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Women's educational attainment is among the key control factors used in the analysis of the effect of employment on marriage formation. The study shows that women's educational attainment progressively delays marriage. As indicated in Table 2 above, first cycle primary education has a negative effect, though the coefficient was found statistically not significant. Women with second cycle primary education and secondary and above education have significantly lower probability by 55 percent and 97 percent, respectively compared to women with no education.

Additionally, the result found a significant interaction effect between secondary and above education and age. This shows that the effect of the secondary education attainment changes by time, that is, according to the temporal moment (woman's age) with which it interacts. Though secondary education tends to decrease women's likelihood of transition into marriage at early ages, it encourages marriage at later ages. This reveals that women with secondary and above education have lower probability of getting married at early ages; while they are at school. However, this effect would be reverted once they leave schooling.

Birth cohort is another control variable found to have a significant effect on women's transition to marriage in the study. A statistically inverse relationship is also observed between timing of first marriage and respondents' birth cohort, indicating that there has been a tremendous change in the timing of marriage in the recent past. Younger birth cohorts were found to significantly postpone their first marriage entry compared to the older birth cohorts. For example, taking women born between mid-1970s and mid-1980s as a reference category, women in the youngest birth cohort (1995-99) are 75 percent less likely to enter first marriage. However, women in the older birth cohort (1965-74) have shown a 36 percent higher probability of transition into first marriage compared to the reference category. The anomaly noted here is that, although a pattern consistent with above assertion regarding the effect of birth cohort on marriage formation is observed among women in younger birth cohort of 1985-94 (negative effect) and older birhcohort of 1955-64 (positive effect)

compared to the reference birth cohort of 1974-84, both coefficients were found statistically insignificant.

Migration experience is another variable found to increase women's likelihood of getting married. In this case, the probability of entry into first marriage among migrant women in particular is higher by more than two folds compared to non-migrant women. Other control variables such as ethnicity, religion, growing up in an intact family, membership in women's/youth's organization, policy period, were not significantly related to the timing of women's first marriage. Concerning residential place, women residing in one of the *kebele*s (Haro Jila *kebele*) were found to have 37 percent higher likelihood of first marriage entry compared to women living in Sebeta 05 *kebele* (reference category).With respect to the woman's age, the results indicate that the likelihood of marrying increases as the years go by, reaches a maximum, then falls again.

With regard to the primary variable of interest, i.e., women's employment, the study shows that it significantly affects their transition into marriage. It also reveals that employment effect differs by the type of employment the woman engages in. Paid employment is found to significantly reduce women's likelihood of getting married. Self-employment, however, significantly increases the annual probability of marriage. As shown in Table 2 above, while a paid employed woman has 49 percent lower probability of getting married in a given year compared to a non-income earning woman, a self-employed woman has 3.63 times higher probability of entering into first marriage compared to a non-income earning woman.

Attempt was also made to test whether these effects of women's employment on marriage entry varies by age by adding interaction terms between women's employment type in a given year and their age in that year. Accordingly, the result shows a statistically significant negative interaction effect exists between self-employment and age variables. This shows that the marriage encouraging effect of self-employment significantly decreases with women's age.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The study reveals that paid employment delays first marriage entry. This is consistent with the assertion of the socio-economic theories of marriage. The study in this regard obtained a range of factors explaining why wage employment lowers/delays women's marriage entry.

Employment is increasingly becoming an alternative to marriage in the study area. Following the expansion of garment industries and flower farms in the study area, young women are increasingly choosing to work in factories instead of getting married at early ages. For example, a 19 years old girl residing in *Nanno Tefki kebele*, explains

> *Soon after I discontinued my education, a young man approached and asked me to marry him. I told him that I don't want to get married at the time as I wanted to work like my friends and change my life. Despite my refusal, he sent elders to my parents with the expectation that my parents will force me to get married. As my father tried to coerce me to accept the proposal, I told him to his face that if he accepts their request to marry me off, I will poison myself. He has never asked me about it since then. I started working in Golden Rose [one of the flower farms in the area].*

Additionally, wage employed women's aspirations related to improving their financial standing and changing job before getting married has contributed to postponement of marriage among wage employed women. The following narration of one of an interviewee illustrates this notion.

> *I have been working in the flower farm for five years now. The work is really difficult. I don't want to continue working in this job forever. In any case, I need to leave this job before I get married. I know how the married women whom I work with are stressed juggling between their demanding work and family life. My plan is to continue this job until I save some money that I may use as a start-up capital for grain trade that I am planning to work in the future. [a woman interviewee, age 22, never married, uneducated, Nanno Tefki]*

Unlike findings of other studies (e.g., Heath & Mobarak, 2015), however, wage employed women rarely mention their intention to advance their education. This is primarily because of the gender segregated nature of the work which limits their aspiration to advance to higher positions as well as the non-rewarding nature of the wage works for higher level of education. A flower farm worker woman from Bonde *kebele* explained,

> "*… whether educated or not, we all work similar job, and earn almost same amount. Flower farm is not like other places where you would get promotion in return to your investment in your education. You don't benefit much in flower farms for being educated*".

Though majority of educated women express their disappointment in this regard, very few young girls who have relatively better education before starting work in the farms

paradoxically explain that their apriori education has allowed them getting job with less hardship, even if not benefitted them in monetary terms.

> *I joined this farm after completing grade 10. I work as a scout [keeping record of infected flowers in greenhouses]. I believe my education has helped me getting this job. Even if the payment I get is not any different from others, I am at least relieved from being flower cutter, a difficult job that exposes one to thrones and working with scissor all day long.*

The gender segregated nature of the works in the export industries may also contribute to lower motivation among women to advance their education as they could not aspire to hold supervisory positions. During the visit made at the flower farms, women supervisors were exceptions. Men hold almost all the supervisory positions both in the packing houses and greenhouses. The qualitative data obtained from the women worker suggest that limited access to supervisory position for women is primarily attributed to the perception of the employer that women are not strong and serious enough to instruct and properly supervise their subordinate women workers.

Sex outside marriage is considered immoral and shameful throughout most of rural Ethiopian society, particularly for girls and women, and girls are seen as vulnerable to men's predations once they reach menarche. There is a wide misconception about young girls working in factories and flower farms questioning their sexual reputation. They are regarded as easy going and lacking decency hence not preferred for marriage. Clearly, marriage prospects of young women who work in the farms could be undermined by gossips regarding sexual liaisons, even if unfounded. For example, an unmarried 18 year old girl working in a flower farm complained saying:

> "*when we go to our work, they took it as if we are going for prostitution. Many people including my uncles scolded my parents for allowing me to work emphasizing the consequence the work would have on my marriage prospect. In fact, at one time there was a gossip in the neighbourhood that I am having sexual affair with a certain man working in the farm, which I have no idea of*".

The study also reveals that the low rate of marriage among wage employed women can be explained by lower preference for working brides among in-laws for their sons. This can be explained from two perspectives: difficulty in post- marital socialization and the expected role incompatibility for young girls working outside home to earn income. As Oppenheimer (1988) notes, satisfactory marital match can actually be achieved in two different but

complementary ways. The first is a *selection process* in which case individuals are chosen so that they match on similar or complementary traits that they (or sometimes their parents) both value. The second is *adaptive socialization* after marriage in which the existing traits of one or both partners are modified in order to improve the quality of the match achieved via the selection process alone. With regard to the selection process, in-laws regard outside homework incompatible with women's household responsibility. A woman who married off her son earlier than she might otherwise have done, because she needed an extra worker in the family shares, her experience:

> *I am getting old. I could not bear the full load of household work any longer. All my daughters were married. So, six years ago we arranged a marriage between my 18 year old son and a 15 year old girl. During the first five years of their marriage, my daughter-in-law was staying at home taking care of the household and their two children. At the time, we work together and we easily complete all the household chores. However, after she started working in flower farm last year, life is getting difficult for me. Literally, I became the one responsible for nursing the children and taking care of household chores. I always advise my fellows never to choose a working bride for their son*.

Similarly, post-marital socialization is considered to be more difficult to achieve for employed women. The importance of adaptive socialization is noted to be important in marital match among parents. An old woman, for example, said, "*young brides who grew helping parents with household chores were likened to small wild birds to be tamed, which if taken in and raised from a young age would naturally imitate what they were taught*". The data from the focus group discussion also suggests the desirability of acquiring a daughter-in-law who could be shaped by her husband and his family, who had not become too independent. Shaping the ones who have gone out to earn income is considered to be difficult as they are seen to have developed their own views or ways of doing things.

Another important finding of this study is that self-employment encourages women's marriage entry. This is contrary to the findings discussed above regarding the effect of wage employment on marriage entry. An important explanation in this regard is that unlike wage employment, self-employed jobs that women engage in are mostly done from home. These works are culturally considered acceptable domain for women who want to earn income. Some even regard unmarried women with a self-employment skill better prepared to cope with economic shocks in families. Hence, young girls with an experience of engaging in home-based income earning activity are most preferred ones for marriage.

In conclusion, the study argues that effect of woman's employment on her likelihood of transition into marriage depends on the type of work she engages in and the sociocultural meaning attached to the work itself. The varying effect of women's employment by the type of employment women engage in can be explained by the unfavourable societal attitude towards wage employed women in particular.

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