Innovations

Experiences of Conflict Resolution in Oromo *Gada* System as a Framework to Peacemaking in Public Universities in Oromia (Ethiopia)

Solomon Dessalegn Negash

Ambo University Woliso Campus

School of Governance and Law

 Department of Governance and Development Studies

Woliso, Ethiopia

Email: **tullusolomon2007@gmail.com**

Abstract: The article attempted to explore, interpret and understand the principles & experiences of peace in Oromo Gada system and develop a working conflict resolution framework that contribute in mitigating student conflicts in the public universities in Oromia national regional state of Ethiopia. Key informant interviews and FGD were employed to gather primary data which was substantiated by secondary data. The obtained data were analyzed and interpreted to construct conflict resolution framework in the context of indigenous Oromo conflict resolution mechanisms. Despite the top down formal conflict resolution and peacemaking attempts,conflicts in public universities were common in Oromia (Ethiopia). The government anduniversities gave less or no consideration for thegrassrootsegalitarian conflict resolution approach developed in the Oromo Gada system as an alternative solution. The center of Oromo Gada system conflict resolution was the disruption of social order caused by conflicts and any peacemaking process was also rationalized from the point of re-installing peace and order. Likewise Oromo Gada system conflict resolution &peacemaking experiences could serve as an alternative conflict resolution mechanismto public university student conflicts in the national regional state of Oromia (Ethiopia).

Key words:1. public universities 2. Oromo Gada system 3. conflict resolution,

Introduction

Background of the study

There is no universal strategy in the process of peacemaking because its practice is often rooted in the thoughts of a concernedsociety. For instance, among the Western world, peaceis generally articulated out of order, the rule of law and material prosperity. The concept is limited to the maintenance of law and order, the pursuit of stability and a relatively safe social and political order (Albert, 2008). On the other hand, peace and peacemaking process in anindigenous Africanpeople

is rooted in their culture, morality, traditions and religions. Peace for African vintage is holistic and refers to the attainment of a societal world view. To be in peace means togetherness, development of societal morality and the realization of a positive human interaction, given the material prosperity and order(Buhari, 2014).

As part of human interaction, in Ethiopia universities werethe destination of a large number of students from all corners of the country. Currently, the country has forty-five public universities excluding the sectorial based ones. Out of the forty-five universities, twelve of them are found in Oromia regional national state of Ethiopia (Tadesse, 2014)&(Yadassa, 2018). Oromia national regional state is one among the eleven regional states in Ethiopia federal system; and the largest both in populationand landmass size(Gelan, 2018)&(Tadesse, 2014).

In Ethiopia or Oromia, universities were unlockedamong others on the premises to promote democratic multicultural state of Ethiopian. But to the opposite universities become the country's ever active ethnic conflict manifestations center.As a solution all concerned institutions and the federal government were doing a lot towardsfirm implementations of the country's lawandregulations besidesinstitutional rules(Adamu, 2013). The government's policy frameworkbelieved that problemscould be solved best through the firm consolidation of institutional rules and regulations.For instance, in the 2019 academic year students of all public universities signed a pact of self-accountability as part of strengthening institutional rules and regulations. Besides, since December of the same year the government deployed federal security forces in all public universities to prevent any conflict between students. Despite these measures the conflict scenario showed no remarkable change (Adamu, 2013).

Similarly, studies that carried out onthe issue under discussion confirmed the presence of frequent conflicts among students of public universities in Oromia (Ethiopia. The studies adopted thetop-down formal approaches to conflict resolution and recommended similarmitigation strategies. Unfair treatment of cultural identities, religions and ethnocentrism attitudes were cited as thecauses to conflicts. Loss oflife, material destructionand programinterruptionswere mentioned as consequences.The undertaken mitigation strategies were official and institutional like written warnings, reproaches, physical punishments and dismissal.Similarlythe studiessuggested firm implementations ofinstitutional rules & regulations and the country'slaw pertaining to public universities(Adamu, 2013),(Zikargae, 2013), (Yadassa, 2018). A very limited works recognized the need for local based wisdom peacemaking as an alternative (Abebe, 2020); (Nek, 2017)to the designated conflicts. It was the least frequently used strategyin handling conflicts among public university students in Oromia (Ethiopia)(Abebe, 2020).

This impliesthe adopted strategiesneglectedan alternative solution, notably indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. However, nowadays community based conflict resolution mechanisms appears shining in conflict studiesand practice (Dewo, 2008). Scholars related to conflict studies believed that a given conflict is best solved if treated from the culturalcontext in which a conflict took place(Albert, 2008); (Dyrberg, 2014)&(Tuso H. , 2011). Specifically Tuso H, (2011, p. 246) arguedthat 'conflict is a culturally constructed social phenomenon and that its resolution must take into account the cultural context in which it takes place' because different readings of events are sourced out of different realities.

Viewed in this context,this study believed that unless the indigenous and local perspective to peace supports and used as an alternative to the official top-down solutions to conflicts;the ethnically reinforced university students' conflict resolution in Ethiopia couldn't be complete and sustainable. Hence, in a country like Ethiopia where there is rich indigenous peacemaking mechanisms, recognizing it as alternative remedy play a pivotal role for the subject under discussion. In line to this, Oromo indigenous concepts of peacemaking andconflict resolutionmechanisms could provide a practical solution to conflicts among public university students in Oromia (Ethiopia). Thepurpose of the study wastherefore to explore the principles& experiences of peace in Oromo Gada system and develop a working conflict resolution framework that contribute in mitigating student based conflicts inthe public universities in Oromia regional national state of Ethiopia.

1.1.   Objective of the study
  ✓ The objective of the study was todevelop an alternativeconflict resolution framework forpublic universities in Oromiafrom the Oromo Gada system peacemaking experience.

1.2.   Research questions
  ✓ What were the underlining principles of conflict resolution in the Oromo Gada system?
  ✓ How does the Oromo Gada system conflict resolution mechanism contribute towards the resolutionof conflicts among public university students in Oromia (Ethiopia)?

2. Methods and Materials

The researcher approached the problem through Grounded Theory approach to qualitative research. This design was preferred considering the basic aim of the research: theorizing the local indigenous traditional practices and concepts to resolve the conflicts; hence, raising understanding from the secondary & primary data-practices embedded in Oromo Abba Gada and local elders. Moreover, the intension of the research was hypothesizing &suggesting a framework of solving the emerging conflicts among public university students in Oromia (Ethiopia). Exploratory research type was preferred as the issue has been less inquired in to. Such approach is described as the means for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems(Creswell, 2009). The need of choosing qualitative approach was to study things in their natural setting, interpret phenomena and getting in touch with everyday social events(Lincoln, 2000). Thus, this method was appropriate to explore peacemaking and conflict resolution principles & experience in Oromo Gada system and its role in settling conflicts among public university students in Oromia (Ethiopia).

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources.The primary sources include informants such as 'Aba Gada' (local leader), local elders, official speeches, students, local authorities and observation.The key informants were purposively selected for their knowledge &experience ofOromo conflict resolution. Sevenkey informants and one focus group discussion (FGD) were interviewed. Semi-structured interview questions were designed and in-depth personal interviewswere carried outwith Mr. TeferaEda'a, chairman of Oromia elders association, on 24 Augest 2021at Addis Ababa; interview withMr. TesfayeDhabi, 'Aba Gada' was held on 25 August 2021 at Dilala town.   Besides, interviewswere held with Lemesa Tufa, SibiloGemeda, BekleEtansa,DiribiDhinsa and NamomsaEfa, eldersfrom Woliso& Ambo towns in September 2021. FGD of eight members was carried out with local elders &government officials at Woliso townon

September 19, 2021. Names of the key informants were mentioned up on their permission. Secondary data were collected from both published and unpublished materials such as books, magazines, journals and report. The collected data was analyzed &interpreted by categorizing, combining and synthesizing. The data were transcribed, compiled and elaborated further for meaningful and patterned information soon after the immediate completion of data collection.

3.   Results (Data Presentation and Analysis)

The major purpose of this study was exploring the principles&experiences of peace in Oromo Gada system and develop a working conflict resolution framework that contribute in mitigating student conflicts in the public universities in Oromia (Ethiopia).In order to achieve this objective, basic research questions were formulated. The study depends on the information obtained from interviews, written sources and researcher's experience. The taped and transcribed data of the key informant interview responses were developed in to categories and sub categories through axial coding technique and substantiated with secondary data. The categories were analyzed in using exploratory approach to qualitative research. Exploratory research was appropriate because it enables the researcher to build stories and ending with a discursive set of theoretical propositions. Thus,to builda working conflict resolution framework for the public universities from Oromo Gada systemdata were organized and presented in thematic manner.The subjects involved in this research article were Oromo elders, community leaders and university officials. The results from key informants, observation and secondary data analysis to construct a working conflict resolutionframework forthe public universitiesin Oromiawere explored, organized, categorized and presented contextually in thematic way as Oromoculture of peace,principles of Oromo Gada peace, procedure of peace dialogue.

3.1.   The Oromo people,Gada system& Culture of Peace

The Oromo are one of the most numerous indigenous peoples on the African continent; belongs to the family of Cushitic people in Ethiopia and Kenya. Out of the approximately 110 million people in Ethiopia about 40 millions are estimated to be Oromo, spread through the highlands of Ethiopia and south the border of Kenya. The Oromos are genealogically organized communities across the different autonomous branches. Within their diversity, Oromo share certain common denominators like common ancestry, culture, language, institution, common psychological makeup & memory(Berisso, 2018).

In their experience of living together the Oromo nation has developed the system that regulates their socio-political and cultural system known as the Gada system. Asmarom Legesse, (2006:128) defined Gada as 'a method of ensuring that all generations take turns in assuming the authority and responsibility to perform domestic labor, takes part in [public responsibilities], lead their people, make laws, mediate or adjudicate conflicts'. Each generation class succeeds one another in eight years term of office. A newly born baby necessarily passes through various functionally differentiated successive five stages. At the age of 40 an individual joins the political office (Legesse, 2006). Since an individual participate in different Gada stages he participate on the different affairs of the society and at the age of 40 he said to be matured or complete in every matters of the society.

The Oromo Gada system is commonly regarded as democratic & egalitarian indigenous institutioncreated by the Oromo to manage their day-to-day life. It is considered democratic among other forits periodic elections; peaceful transfer of political power; equitable distribution of power across generations and down to the community; rule of law & accountability; secularism; social integration and peace building roles and presence of check and balance systems. In the Gada system there is no hierarchy or monarchy; all humans deserve to be treated with almost equal respect without regard to human differences(Berisso, 2018)&(Ta'a, 2016).

Among the various functions of Oromo Gada institutions, its peacemaking &conflict resolutionaspectis widely practiced by the Oromo community despite the modern conflict administration system(Dewo, 2008);(Jalata, 2012);(Legesse, 2006). As Dewo (2008:140) explains " [t]he Oromo of Ethiopia maintains that 'peace,' translated as 'nagaa', is the essential key to all cosmic and human order, possessing the highest and most central value for humanity to pursue. This view is expressed in the songs they sing, in the prayers and blessings they offer, in the ritual and ceremonial activities they undertake, in the speeches and narrations they deliver, in the administrative and legal actions they perform and in the proverbs, folktales and stories they cite or tell. The Oromo concept and practice of peace is based on traditional values and beliefs anchored in the Gadaa, the politico-military and ritual system of the Oromo".

In addition the interviewed community elders all confirmed that "peace is everywhere at every time, a natural fact and exclusively part of the peoples' social life". Sibilo,specifically added that "peace among university students necessarily part of their day-to-day life experience and couldn't only be a matter of pursuit of order.Peace between them could be maintained best by cultivating students' social values and norms than the pursuit of rule &order.Peace as an order couldn't be attained without material and financial costs; and less sustainable and amenable compared to the indigenous Oromo conflict resolution approach".

3.2.   Sociality and Conflict scenario in the public universities
In the post 2018 student conflicts were frequent in the country's public universities that could be regarded as social unrest or weird relationships. The rift and misunderstandings were between students who had strong shared life from dormitory, dining hall, cafeteria, class room, library to common compound(Abebe, 2020). The misunderstandings turned in to violent conflicts that become a bottle neck for most public universities. In most of the time the incidents were resolved by police action and endless court proceedings. Students were obliged by external forces and try restoring their normal life without any credible reconciliation process. In this regard Sibilo argued that "the resolution mechanism was mechanistic to the groups in conflictbecause their traditional conflict resolution values were given no credit. Students were pleased by new and borrowed models like self-confidence, self-reliance and tolerance without reference to their traditional values of conflict resolution and reconciliation"

However, people of the different identity groupsin Ethiopia voice more or less comparable claims of cultural understandings despite a minor variety of settings among them while practice(Tafese, 2016); and their social relations were partly guided by indigenous mechanisms. Tefera put in this regard,as "societies attached with each other in deep-rooted cultural facts and elders play a major role in solving any inconveniency between groups or individuals by devising strategies to shape

relationships". Concerning significances of indigenous conflict resolution community elders FGD putas "it provides opportunities to meet the needs of conflicting parties through extensive listening to address interests effectively; so that each party is satisfied with the outcome. Similarly the process of Oromo conflict resolution mechanisms involves consensus and conciliation techniques that heading toheal existing injuries for better future relationships"

3.3.   Peacemaking &Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Oromo Gada System

Conflict resolution is a process of peacemaking and handling conflicts at different stages of human organization to prevail peace. Likewise, Oromo Gada system conflict resolution takes in to consideration restoring relationships even above solving specific problems(Legesse, 2006). Towards the implementation the Oromo people had developed different actors that fit different conflict scenarios from local to the national level as a mediator(Terfa, 2018).

Concerning the general understanding of Oromo conflict resolution and third party involvement, elders FGD argued"conflict resolution mechanisms among Oromo society encourages conflicting parties to reconstruct their orientation to each other, to their institutions, to community and nature. Similarly Oromo elders as a third party manage the conflicting parties' interactions and promote their approaches & behavior that tends to reproduce healing of past injuries, mutual trust and sense of communalism. Involvement of the third party is important to create conducive environment for mutual understanding of the conflicting parties".

As indicated by elders FGD and key informant interviews "the Oromo Gada system has devised mechanisms to resolve any misunderstandings or conflicts at all social levels. Any cases of conflicts are fronted to the 'jaarsabiyya' (elders), 'shanacha' (elders council with five members)or 'Abba Gada' (leader) for'jaarsummaa' (mediation) or 'arara' (reconciliation) process. If the conflicting case is minor enough the immediate neighbor elders' manage the issue.A conflict which is strong in depth & extent like death, intra or inter-communal conflicts taken to the'shanacha' or 'Abba Gada' and the reconciliation process is facilitated. Oromo elders or council members are chosen for their knowledge, trust &honesty they acquired from the community". Tefera put in this regard "settling disputes or restoring peace through Oromo reconciliation goes beyond healing the affected relationship and may results in peace building".Ta'a (2016) notedsimilarly as cultural approach to healing leads to conflict transformation.

As stated in the introductory part of this paper student conflicts in thepublic universities ofOromia were by and large identity-based in characteristic that sourced out of ethnocentric attitude & bias. Pertaining to such conflicts and its mitigation scheme Sibiloexplains: "Oromo Gada system 'jaarumma' (mediation) 'arara' (reconciliation) mechanisms can contribute its part as an alternative peacemaking and conflict resolution in public universities ofOromia for its philosophies, beliefs, values, traditions, institutions and consideration social realities. In other wordsbuilding culture of peace in the mentioned universities requires recognizing and strengthening what is (the cultural values, beliefs, values, institutions, traditions, etc) in the society that promotes culture of peace and changing the behavior, cognition and emotion of people accordingly". Similarly, Tesfaye noted that "a peaceful society had shared values and beliefs that shone violence, promotes tolerance, and cooperation".

3.4. Principles of Oromo Gada system conflict resolution & peacemaking

Anyone who focuses on the frameworks of Oromo conflict resolution it is important to understand the everyday social life realities of the Oromo society; since conflict resolution discussions consider the possible all related backgrounds that necessarily extend to the thoughts and understandings of others(Dewo, 2008). In line to this both the key informants & FGD argued "the Oromo people conflict resolution is not a mere de-escalation of dispute between the parties but also prevailing sprit of collective humanity and the will of nature. The mentality is that any conflict situation not only deteriorates the relations of the parties in dispute but also challenges the surrounding environments which had direct or indirect association with them. Towards the transcendence of Oromo peace principles from generation-to-generation as priori idea of conflict transformation between the Oromo themselves and others, Gada system principles of peace had immense contribution". Cooperation/integration, universal humanism, personhood and peace governance are the key pillars of Gada peace principles.

Integration as a principle of Gadasystemconflict resolution refers to the sociality of human life. Citing the Oromo Gada systemTesfaye put, "human aspirations are achieved only if he/she forms integrative relations with other fellow human being regardless of his/her identity or other differences. The Oromo believedas humans' life is predominantly communal; and come close to other fellow human mainly for friendships than material benefit". In line to this Bekele cited "'addoyyee' (girl's friendship) and'michu' (boy's friendship) institutionsas an example to integrative institutions. The formation of both 'addoyyee' and 'michuu' institutions are not influenced by personal backgrounds like identity or religion but only believe in interconnectedness, sociality and positive relationship. These friendship institutionnot only limited to individual level relations even extends to community level engagement. In this sense it is an institution that governing life and property security that facilitate free movement of people as well as solving conflicts in traditional bases". Nearly in similar understanding, Tsega Etefa (2012) has naunced the Oromo principle of integration as "all are welcome". The concept is that "Oromo treat non-Oromo persons not only as equals but also as brothers and sisters" regardless of his/her identity(Etefa, 2012, p. 71).

Understanding disputant's interest is another important principle of Oromo conflict resolution.Concerning this Teferacommented, "prior to engage in any form of conflict resolution process all parties to dispute as well as the mediators should understand the philosophy known as universal humanism; allhumans are sourced from common ancestor that force them to forge common destiny despite the presence of specific differences in their living courses". Diribi further elaborated the concept of universal humanism as "it originates from the basic existential conditions in which the Oromo organize and conduct their lives among themselves and with non-Oromo societies. In other words, Oromo notion of conflict resolution is not oriented from any absolute standards like bureaucratic conflict resolution but from the Oromo people social relations and life situations". In similar understanding Sibilostated "interconnectedness that arises out of common needs principally narrow relational gaps; likewise practices of conflict resolution among public universitystudents better if any collective interests were considered from their everyday life to the concept of universal humanism".

Another principle is that, Oromo conflict resolution rooted within the notion of personhood.In this regard, Namomsa claimed "the concept of Oromo personhood ishaving a good character and moral

wellbeing by individuals. Specific to Gada system conflict resolution,personhood isall about an exchange of recognition between the parties in conflict; for which it guides the process of conflict resolution from start to finish. It is personhood that justifies 'qixxe' (equal treatment of persons or groups) between the parties in conflict.Even if the Oromo community recognize age based social status but it doesn't mirror any superiority-inferiority complex. In Oromo thought of conflict resolution process therefore, any attempt of conflict resolution that fails'qixxe' has no use than exacerbating the situation".

The forth principle ofGada system peace is Oromo peace governance.Tesfayenoted in this regard "the Oromo people believed that the maintenance of peace is not the affairs of limited authoritative body in a community or social groupings. Rather it is the responsibility of the whole people who come together in any form of relationship".Etefa (2012, p. 86) explains Oromo conception of peace governance as it "can be maintained not only by administrative activities and legal procedures but also by raising the awareness of people about its importance. It is through blessing, prayer, ritual gathering, ceremonial undertaking and meetings, assemblies, work places, and occasional performancesthe Oromo reinforce values that promote peace".

Gudied with the principles of 'Oromo peace', TadesseKena'a, successfully managed conflict reconciliation process between Amhara and Oromo students' at Woliso campus in April 2019. Tadesse randomly fronted ten students from mass of the students convened under the tree to discuss on the matter. He forwarded a question "who can ethnically categorizethe fronted students, by looking at their face & appearance?" No one could answer. Then he concluded that, "all of us have unseen common natural essence despite our distinct features we claim in due course of life". Tedesse's demonstration based question was driven out of Oromo Gada system conflict resolution principles that opened the door for discussion andmotivated the disputants to thinkhow their tomorrow's relationships could be devised. As student council president of Woliso campus confirmed "the stated conflict was tried two times by the top government officials employing the formal institutional mechanism but failed to succeed".

3.5. Procedures of OromoGada system conflict resolution

The Gada system of conflict resolution moves through certain identifiable steps on its way to managing and resolving conflict and arriving at 'arara' /reconciliation/ so that harmonious relationship could be restored among the conflicting parties and the surroundings. The key informants & FGD together claimed that "mitigation of public university conflicts in Oromia could be easier ifboth principles of OromoGada peace and procedures of Gada system conflict resolution adopted and applied. In other words it could serve as conflict resolution process framework". The points hereunder arethe procedures of Gada system conflict resolution.

Oromo conflict resolutions commonly begin by preparation. Namomsa noted preparation phase of Oromo conflict resolution as "the phase of assessing conflicting party' behavior, conflict intensity, the conflicts current dynamics.'Jarsabiyyaa' (elders) are busy enough in looking the way out and conciliatory gesture like signs of willingness to discuss and negotiate among key players". The preparation stage paves the way for the mechanism for normalization. Diribiin his part pointed out that "the preparation stage begins the actual process of conflict resolution, communicating the parties in conflict either in separate or in common depending on the conflicts nature. For conflicts that

resulted in loss of life and disability, the preliminary communication process is carried out in separate session. In such conflict instances Gadahas developed the process of conflict resolution standards in which the third-party act with. In minor conflicts third party can adjust a process framework that fit circumstances without losing the grand principles of Oromo conflict resolution &peacemaking. The framework,of course necessarily accepted by the parties in conflict; and conflict resolution process encourages the groups in conflict to be abided by the accepted norms".

The process to be followed after the preparation phase; Tefera explains, "'jarsabiyya' or 'shanacha' deliberate the conflict's nature, the law that was broken and the customs that have been violated and the laws and customs that could be applied in resolving the case. They commonly begin to move from stage of diagnosis to that of finding a formula for resolution. Immediately after deliberation the next step is assessing background of the conflict. Understanding more about the inner motives of the parties in conflict from the beginningis important. The mediators or councilors facilitate a round table platform between parties in conflict for discussion. The two parties confess the causes to conflict and the entire conflict scenario". Similarly Lemesa put,"in Oromo conflict resolution mechanism, confession is one of the key steps of conflict resolution process. Conflict participants are made by the elders to confess the conflict reality thoroughly turn by turn. Confession process begins with elders' usual prayer for God to prevail peace. The elders also remind the Oromo curse and underlines both parties not to add any piece of lie to the conflict situation while their confession."

Tefera&Tesfaye further elaborated the confession process as "it motivates individuals' self-understanding to re-assess their thoughts, actions behavior and overall being towards the conflict situation. Confession process in Oromo conflict resolution is therefore all about inward thought and fact bound; projected to better future than re-instating the conflict scenario. At the end of this process each party's confessional words are triangulated with conflicting party's emotions, feelings, body language, eye contact etc. both to find out the root cause of the conflict as well as the committed wrongness. If the conflicting parties confession showed gaps on the conflict context witness could be heard. Confession phase is resulted in rationalizing the context. In this stage elders debated each other on the issue and seek for any issue remain unsolved for final decision. The decision making process is characterized by consideration of the social significance of resolving disputes as social relations and internal solidarity".

The FGD, Tefera and Tesfayecollectively also agreed that "any intended decision isdone for the sake of consensus that will produce 'arara' or restoration of peace and harmony among the parties in conflict and the surroundings. At this phase having looked at both sides, your community may suggest that you - the one party - make this concession. It would then be fair to expect you - the other party - to respond by reciprocating concession from your side. The point is to make a fair exchange for public recognition. The presiding 'hayu' (chairperson) by citing their prayer to 'Waaqa' (God) that their effort will bear fruits ask the parties to accept 'murtee' (decision) and look forward for peace and reconciliation. The 'hayu' finally will declare the guilty part to accept 'ballessa' (wrongdoing) and the grieved party to accept 'dhugaa' (truth) to forgive and be reconciled. When an agreement is eventually reached, the good news is shared with the groups and communities concerned. The agreement is then affirmed as a social contract in a ritual way, some kind of drinking or coffee is shared. The affirmation can range from a handshake in public to an elaborate ceremony

as required by tradition. The purpose of this is to spread the news about the satisfactory conclusion of the conflict resolution process".

4.   **Discussions**

The study focused on exploring the experiences Oromo Gada system conflict resolution and develop a working conflict resolution framework that contribute to mitigate conflicts among public university students in Oromia. In most of the public universitiesin Oromia (Ethiopia)student conflicts were becoming common. Abebe (2020) argued conflict scenarios vs. conflict transformation scheme in public universities in Oromia werenot going parallel and universitiesexperiencing countless conflict situations. Universitiesand the concerned bodies' attempted to solve the problem exclusively through the formal legal instruments. However, magnitude of the conflicts showed no remarkable development despite the efforts. This implies the mitigation strategy required other alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. In this regard the locally available indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms like the Oromo Gada system could serve as an alternative for its"guiding process and a relationship healing journey to assist people in returning to harmony" (Walker, 2004, p. 536).

In Ethiopia the organizational structure of public universities jumps the status of federal regional governments including all the bottom-line governments; hence there is no formal-legal room for the local community to participate in matters like peacemaking and conflict resolution activities. Similarlythese public universities missed the importance of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms from the surrounding communities. Dewo (2008) puts in this regard that, it is impossible to expect an island of peace in a world of unlimited human want and interests. In similar vein the plurality of life in the public universitiesof the state showed, as the mainstream conflict resolution mechanism alone unable to address the reality on the ground.Themultidimensional interactions among university students in Oromiatherefore conversely requiredan accommodative interaction balancing and conflict resolution mechanisms.

As indicated elsewhere in this paper the formal approach to conflict management was a straightforward and focuses only on a given conflict consequences &corrective measures (punishment) with no room for parties' future relations. As the study result showed,gap ofthe formal conflict resolution mechanism to address the inquiry under discussion could beaddressed better if the Oromo Gada system conflict resolution mechanism was employed as an alternative. The Oromo Gada system is a system that developed by the Oromo people to coordinate their economic, political and social life among themselves and others. It is one of the black African democratic, egalitarian and principled civilizations that far better express the notions of humanity in general and human interaction particular. Under the Oromo Gada system there are specialized institutions to coordinate the different aspects of Oromo life; and its peacemaking and conflict resolution mechanism is one among the institutions(Berisso, 2018)&(Legesse, 2006).

For the Oromo people, peace is the most valued and desired asset. Peace is the Oromos' ever-asked question and wished prosperity not only for mankind but also for all creatures in the universe (Tuso H. , 2000)&(Ta'a, 2016). As the collected data indicated, the Oromo Gadasystem conflict resolution mechanism is effective in addressing and seeking solution for the different levels of human conflict. Oromo Gada system conflict resolution mechanism is claimed effective because its principles and process of conflict resolution addresses the dimensions of conflicts from all angles. It looks far

beyond the fronted disputants and facilitatereconciliation with less or no directive role.The concepts of universal humanism, integrations, personhood, human interests, and Oromo peace governance play pivotal role in the process of Oromo Gada system conflict resolution & peacemaking.

Towards the successful process of Oromo conflict resolution the mediating elders creativityand ability to map out conflict environment to peaceful environment matters. To elaborate this point quoting a statement made by TadesseKenea, on the process of peacemaking between Oromo and Amharastudents held in April 2019 was important. His statement reads, "for your majorities, your mothers have been helping you in making charcoal, selling firewoodor serving as housemaid. While doing this she might be barefoot and empty belly, wearing teary and dirty closes. Instead she made you eat, wear, pays and sent you to the university. In Ethiopia a child is seen as social security and every mother expects something from her child to look her back on while retirement. Hence, no mothers expect bring her back dead body of her son or daughter. The death of a given student unconditionally darkens hope and fortune of our destitute mothers". Motivated by the speech, most students' couldn't control their tears and hugged each other.This could be accounted as the discussants creativityto look the conflicts scenario from back to front.

As the obtained evidenceportrays, theOromo Gada system conflict negotiation method wasgenerally 'the neighborhood' system. Its success was characterized by elemental simplicity, participatory nature, adaptable flexibility and complete relevance. It starts discussions with individuals social context on an emerging dispute; it could be a smaller or a larger organization, for example, a school or a religious group. Instead of directing the discussion towards spite, or the apportioning of blame, it is pointed towards a solution. Mediators look forward to the future, for improved relations – not only between the disputants but also in the whole community that is involved.

Throughout the course of this study, the current study researcher found out that the centrally guided formal conflict resolution mechanism alone couldn't fully address sustainable peace in the public universitiesfound inOromia (Ethiopia). Peace, looked at from this perspective, limited to the maintenance of law and order, the pursuit of stability butthe ground realities were begging something beyond stability and order; an alternative mechanism that promote the culture of positive peace in the campus environment. Of course, building the culture of peace require recognizing and strengthening the community's values, principles and institutions that promote culture of peace; conversely avoid or reduce actions, behaviors, relations, situations and factors that undermine the condition of peace. Therefore, if installing a sustainable peace was desiredin the public universities under study, considering the host societies values, belief and institutions (Oromo Gada system culture of peace)in the process of peacemaking and conflict resolution had no option.Hence, public universities found in the national regional state ofOromia better look forward implementing and institutionalizing the experiences of Oromo Gada system peacemaking & conflict resolution mechanisms by cascading it in to their environment andstakeholders interests,without losing its principal essence, as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism.

5.   **Conclusion**

The rationale behind Oromo Gada system conflict resolution is the breakdown of social order that requires immediate medication and reinstallation of peace for which without peace life is inconceivable. The Oromo Gada system is categorically cognizant of human differences and oneness; hence it can lied down the founding block for accommodative peacemaking and conflict resolution. Besides, Oromo conflict resolution is holistic in characteristic and could be easily applied in both intra-communal and inter-communal conflicts. Since conflict resolution mechanisms of the Oromo Gada system considers the parties in conflict social relations from back to front as a framework of conflict analysis and resolution; adopting and practicing it could be the way forward for better peace especially in the public universities found in the national regional state of Oromia.

6. *Works Cited*

1. Adamu, A. (2013). *Causes of Ethnic Tension and Conflict among University Students in Ethiopia. ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: EDU2013-0644. (pp. ISSN 2241-2891). Athens: Athens Institute for Education and Research.*

2. Albert, I. O. (2008). *Understanding peace in Africa. In D. J. Francis, Peace and conflict in Africa (pp. 31-45). London: Zed books.*

3. Berisso, T. (2018). *The Oromoo Gadaa System: Why Considered Democratic? Gadaa Journal, 1-8.*

4. Buhari, A. T. (2014). *Methods of conflict resolution in African traditional society. An international multidescipilinary journal, Ethiopia, 8(2), 138-157.*

5. Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. London : SAGE Publications.*

6. Dewo, T. (2008). *The concept of peace in the Oromo gadaa system: Its mechanisms and moral dimension. THE JOURNAL OF OROMO STUDIES, 15(1), 139-179.*

7. Dyrberg, T. B. (2014). *Foucault on the Politics of Parrhesia. London: Macmillan Publishers Limited.*

8. Etefa, T. (2012). *Integration and peace in East Africa : a history of the Oromo nation. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.*

9. Gelan, A. (2018). *Chronicles on the Political Economy of Plunder In Ethiopia(1991-2018). Addis Ababa: Birihanina Selam Printing Press.*

10. Jalata, A. (2012). *Gadaa (Oromo Democracy): An Example of Classical African Civilization. The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol.5, no.1, March 2012, 5(1), 126-152.*

11. Legesse, A. (2006). *Oromo democracy: An indigenous African political system. Asmera: The red sea press, inc.*

12. Lincoln, Y. a. (2000). *Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences . In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln, Handbook of Qualitative Research. London: Sage Publication Inc.*

13. Nek, A. B. (2017). *Interpersonal conflicts and styles of managing conflicts among students at Bahi-Dar university, Ethiopia. Journal of student affairs in Africa, 5(1), 27-39.*

14. Ta'a, T. (2016). *The Gadaa System and Some of Its Institutions among the Booranaa: A Historical Perspective1. EJOSSAH, XII(2), 81-97.*

15. Tadesse, T. (2014). *Quality Assurance in Ethiopian Higher Education: Boon or Bandwagon in Light of Quality Improvement? JHEA/RESA, 131-15.*

16. Tafese, T. (2016, January 31). *Conflict Management through African Indigenous Institutions: A Study of the Anyuaa Community. Retrieved from wjss.sciedupress.com.*

17. Terfa, M. A. (2018). Exploring the current practices of Jaarsumma as indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms: The case ofDambi Dollo Town. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 15-19.

18. Tuso, H. (2000). Indegenous peace process of Oromo society. In W. Zartman, *Traditional cures for modern coflicts: African conflict 'medicine'* (pp. 79-96). New York: Lynne Rienner.

19. Tuso, H. (2011). Indigenous Processes of Conflict Resolution Neglected Methods of Peacemaking by the New Field of Conflict Resolution. In J. Senehi, T. Matyók, & S. Byrne, *Critical Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy* (pp. 245-21). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

20. Walker, P. O. (2004). Decolonizing Conflict Resolution: Addressing the Ontological Violence of Westernization. *American Indian quarterly*, 28(3&4), 527-549.

21. Yadassa, M. (2018). Ethnic tension among students and the role of leadres in Ethiopia public universities: experiences and reflections. *Journal of culture,society and development*, 41, 1-7.

22. Zikargae, M. H. (2013). The Impacts of Ethnocentrism and Stereotype on Inter-Cultural Relations of Ethiopian Higher Education Students. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies Volume: 3 – Issue: 4*, 3(4), 126-148.