

ADOLESCENCE IN RETROSPECT¹

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(Ethiopian University Students Report about Their Life During Their Adolescent Years)

The teaching of courses in Human Growth and Development in Ethiopian institutions like the HSIU or the TTI will soon make the instructors aware of the problems concerned with the practical application of facts described in the foreign textbooks. It is obvious at first sight that these facts are not related to the Ethiopian scene. One objective of such psychology course, however, is that its participants should be prepared to understand the adolescent students in their schools better and so consequently help them to make the best use of their abilities under the given conditions. Unfortunately there is little material available about the upbringing of Ethiopian youth. To conduct directed and methodologically appropriate and representative studies is for various reasons extremely difficult if not impossible.² The study to be presented here is therefore only a very modest attempt to contribute descriptive material about a highly selected group as represented by Ethiopian university students. The material may help in broadening the understanding of the conditions under which Ethiopian academic youth has been living before joining institutions of higher training and may also help to provide material for further directed research in this area.

The study was conducted in 1969 with 150 Ethiopian diploma students, who were all taking the course Psychology of Adolescence. In order to supplement the textbook material, these students were requested to produce a paper describing three experiences they would consider memorable from

1. The results of this study were first reported in a symposium "Ecology of Adolescents in Present Days" at the xxth International Congress of Psychology in Tokyo 1972.
2. Pausewang, Siegfried, "*The hazards of demographic and demoscopic research in Ethiopia 1969*", A. A. mimeographed paper.

their adolescent years. The instruction was purposely given in such a general way in order not to concentrate on problems and difficulties but also to give way to reports about pleasant and selffulfilling experiences. Besides the students were asked to fill in a brief open-ended questionnaire regarding their familial and ethnic background.

It was understood that students would select experiences which for one or the other reason were of particular personal significance, and, thus would provide valuable information about the environmental conditions of some of the Ethiopian youth.

The students were in their first year of training after having had at least two years of practical teaching experience. A look into the data concerning their family background provides us with some information regarding the ecological factors characteristic for this group of university students. Compared with regular or degree students³ they were advanced in age with 25 years as an average. This group started formal education relatively late at an average age of 9½ years. Despite the existing priest or quoran schools in the country, only 12 out of the 150 persons said that they had started schooling before the age of 7 years while half of the group went to school after having completed 10 years of age. The insignificant number of 3 females among 150 subjects of the study shows that only very few females in this age group had received so much formal education and work experience that they would have fulfilled the requirements to participate in this program.

If one looks at the provinces these students came from, their statements indicate that nearly every second student (48%) originated from either Shoa, Eritrea, Tigre or Harrar, whereas the other 51.3% came from the ten other provinces of the Empire.

Approximately two thirds of the total group listed Amharic as their mother tongue (64.67%) and 16.67% said that they had grown up with Tigrigna as their mother tongue

18.66% or about every fifth student gave other Ethiopian language than those mentioned as his mother tongue.

3. Sociology Department HSIU Sociology Student's Association & Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology; *Report on a Research on the Social Situation of HSIU-Students.* mimeographed. p. 3.

These students referred to Galigna, Guragigna, Hyda, Kembattagna, Moteligna and Bilen as their mother tongues, among which Galigna was the language most strongly represented.

92.01% of the total group said that they were Christian by denomination and only 6.67% revealed that they were Muslims. The Christian majority was composed of 86% Orthodox believers, and the other 6.01% said they belonged to a variety of different Christian denominations.

Most of the students in this group came from large families. On the average they came from families with 5 to 6 children. 70% of the group reported that they were more than four living children in their family.

Since schools are not evenly distributed all over the fourteen provinces, students had to leave their parental houses quite early by the age of 15.9 years, and were then living with relatives, friends or others often under not quite favorable conditions as shall be explained later.

Despite their advanced age and the traditional practice of early marriage⁴ below the age of 20 years, only 18 of the students reported that they were married.

All these reported data indicate that in this study sample only a very distinct group of Ethiopians is represented, and that therefore their reports cannot be regarded as representative experiences of the Ethiopian academic youth until further evidence is available.⁵

The students were also requested to rate their adolescent years according to a 9 point two dimensional scale, ranging from 1 (adolescence was an extremely unhappy time for me, full of worries and frustrations) to 9 (I was happy all the time, life was easy and enjoyable for me). The self-rating revealed a slight positive tendency towards favorable ratings ($M=5.28$). 44% of the group regarded their adolescent years more as a time characterized by happiness and enjoyment, whereas only one out of every five students held the opinion that his adolescent years were a time of permanent stress, worries and tension. A quarter of all students said that they had both happy and frustrating experiences during their youth, and that for that reason they must classify these years as neither particularly happy nor unhappy.

4. Levine, D. N. *Wax and Gold*, Chicago 1965, pp. 90.

5. Cox, D. R. *The Adolescent in Ethiopia in: Journal of Education*, Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1967, pp 50-56.

When the content-analysis was undertaken of the 455 contributions⁶ the analyst first rated the reports according to the scale underlying the self-ratings. It was found that with no other reference material than the content of the reports, the rating no longer reflected such optimistic views as those expressed in the self-ratings.

The content of 289 contributions (61.5%) revealed that at the time of the vent the student must have been grossly frustrated and worried. 101 or 22.1% of the contributions indicated that the experiences described were associated with happy feelings. The rest of the remaining 74 reports (16.4%) were not clearly classifiable but mostly dealt with serious problems too.

The positive trend in the self-ratings may be seen as an effect of the known phenomenon of 'rosy memory' if a general statement is concerned. Detailed and relatively precise sounding descriptions, however, may reveal more realistic aspects of the past situation, and are therefore of greater significance.^{7,8}

Then the actual content-analysis was undertaken and the reports classified.

1. A third (33.8%) of all descriptive reports were related to education, learning or vocational life.
2. A quarter (24.5%) of all papers stressed relations in the family and among close relatives.
3. 18.9% social relations outside the family to peers and girl friends were emphasized and nearly
4. A quarter of all descriptions (24.5%) dealt with experiences in a variety of areas which were not classifiable. Then the reports in each category were further analyzed for the main themes appearing from the content (See tables I, II, III, IV).

1. As mentioned above the greatest number of reports was related to the area of educational and vocational development.⁹ Although every third report was related to a situation associated with feelings of satisfaction and happiness, twice as many descriptions indicated very discouraging and frustrating experiences.

6. Some of the students reported more experiences than the three that were requested.

7. Hiltmann, Hildegard, *Psychologische Begutachtung der Glaubwürdigkeit Jugendlicher Zeugen* in: *Ztschr. f. Diagnostische Psychologie u. Persönlichkeitsforschung*, Vol. IV No. 1-1056 pp. 24-44.

8. Arentzen, F. *Psychologie der Zeugenaussage*, 1970 Gottingen.

9. In this as well as in the other categories only the extremely positive or negative experience will be discussed.

TABLE I

Reported experiences related to education, learning and early vocational work

Rank	Positive experiences	N	%	Rank	Experiences related to frustration and stress	N	%
	Personal satisfaction through experiences of success, recognition and reward in early professional work	14	33.3	1	Adjustment problems in work and in learning	23	29.1
				2	Difficulties with authorities and discipline	13	16.5
2	Happiness about possibilities to begin or to continue education and training	11	26.2	3	Poverty of family as an obstacle for successful education	11	13.9
3	Happiness about academic success	9	21.4	4	Limitation of possibilities to continue with education	8	10.1
4	Professional work as means to help ones own family	4	9.5	5	Failure and lack of success in training and work	8	10.1
5	Education as a means to reach greater independence and to master adjustment problems better	4	9.5	6	Separation from parents and close relatives for further education	8	10.1
				7	General inability to cope with existing problems	8	10.1
	Total	42	99.9		Total	79	99.9

When we look at the themes associated with positive experiences we can see that they all imply a positive influence upon the self-concepts of their reporters despite the obstacles that had to be overcome. Through personal effort the young individual experienced himself as capable and worthy.

Some examples from the original material may serve for illustration: Case 620: shows how persistent work and practice is followed not only by personal success in the extracurricular activities of the school but is also for positive influence upon social appreciation and self-esteem.

When I finished the 10th grade — at that time I was between 17 and 18, I started to study playing the trumpet. At first it was hard, but after a lot of practice it became easy. After the school had reopened I became very popular. Every second month we had a music show for the people charging 50c each. At that time I was very happy. When I showed my ability to the people I felt superior.

Case 611: illustrates how financial security and absence of restrictive measures or persons contribute to feelings of happiness. There is also emphasis on the need for special appreciation and the importance of its satisfaction.

When I joined high school, I was given \$ 30 monthly. Since I had no one to bother about at home and enough time to study my lessons I became clever and stood 2nd. in class out of 38 students. The results I showed in class made me acquainted with many teachers, and I also got many friends. During my high school I also started participating in various sports like foot-ball and volleyball. My school years were the happiest years I had in life since I was now free from my stepmother, lived independently, knew many people, and had many friends.

As described in 87 cases, the striving for education and further training must have been exceptionally hard and frustrating as reflected by the predominant themes. Often adjustments to conditions were demanded for which the young men were not prepared at all: these included difficult climatic conditions under which work was requested; and long distance between home and school which caused particular stress. Later adolescents were assigned to places where they couldn't find anyone to help with household chores, or the young man found himself in a new social group where temptation to engage in heavy drinking or even criminal activities was very great.

There were also difficulties to face that came through authorities which didn't seem to understand the special situation of these youths. Rigid discipline was superimposed upon them when they had anticipated a greater degree of freedom. The extreme poverty of the parental family was felt as a severe handicap to pursuing educational goals. Hunger, lack of clothing, lack of cash money and above all the requirement of begging for mere survival were among the facts mentioned that interfered with concentration upon learning. Other frustrating drawbacks were experienced in the absence of possibilities for further education which had been begun with so much enthusiasm. That under such circumstances failure is hardly avoidable and causes a serious threat to self-respect and feelings of security is obvious. Not all students had sufficiently grown out of their families; that is seen in the stress and difficulties they describe when reporting about leaving home at a relatively early age to pursue education. Particular frustration is caused when difficulties and problems become so strong that the young men regard themselves as unable to cope with the situation.

In Case 622: numerous hardships are described which the reporter had to overcome. Because of his unusual persistence and determination to learn he finally succeeded and is now enjoying his success as an university graduate. This case is of particular interest for the techniques¹⁰ the student applied to master the various problems he had to face.

In the morning we left the church compound where we had stayed overnight and went searching for the house of my niece. Her husband was a day worker in one embassy. When I saw her I was very happy. She gave me something to eat. After 3 days of rest her husband took me to work. I was lucky to get the same salary as he did, \$1 per day. After working for some weeks I asked my niece's husband if he could help me to join a school. He advised me to work in the daytime and to study at

10. Thomae, H. *Das Individuum und seine Welt. Eine Persönlichkeits-theorie.*

night. I agreed and did as he told me. After working for five months I lost my job. For about one year I didn't, get any job but I continued my night classes by working as a coolie during the daytime. Sometimes I went to bed - which was just a mat spread over the floor - without food. After this year of struggle I found work in another embassy. Thus I was relieved from starvation. Through the help of my master I finally found a job as a house-boy with a foreign school director. He was a kind man, who helped me in many ways. Although my condition was now improved I lost my school. Later I found another possibility and joined a private school where I learned in the afternoon. Although I had a great interest in learning I often had to face many obstacles. One of them was the wife of that director. She was against my learning. I tried to please her by my work in many ways and overtime, but this didn't have any effect. One day when I was in the sixth grade I went to one of the teachers to help me explaining some difficult words. As soon as I started talking the lady saw me through the window and came shouting. I was very much afraid and didn't know what to do and where to escape. She warned me of talking with the teacher and said that my place is in the kitchen and that I never have to talk to any teacher again. Then I started talking within myself and understood that I was only half a man who had no right. I wanted to insult her to leave my job, and to go to my country. But the word of St. Paul came to my mind which says: "Obey your master even if he is cruel, knowing that you will prepare yourself for the grace of God". Thus I was able to overcome the evil. I feel about those years as the years of a journey between death and life; in the end I became successful.

2. Family relations and conditions under which the family was living was the second important issue. The distribution of themes as presented in Table II shows that there are few incidents only about which the reporters express feelings of satisfaction and happiness; the great majority of descriptions deal with experiences which must have been associated with a remarkable degree of worries and emotional disturbances.

TABLE II

Reported experiences related to family relations and living conditions of the family

Rank	Positive experience	N	%	Rank	Experiences related to frustrations and stress	N	%
1	Reunion of family members after a long time of separation	5	62.5	1	Untimely death of one of both the parents	30	34.9
2	Happy togetherness and social approval of the family	3	37.5	2	Broken family through divorce and consecutive exposure to a stepmother	19	22.1
				3	Problems related to extreme poverty of the family and their social recognition	12	14.0
				4	Generational conflicts over authority and need for independence	15	17.4
				5	Other problems within the family (lasting illnesses, nomadic life ect.)	10	11.6
	Total	8	100.0		Total	86	100.0

It seems that happy and balanced emotional relationships in the family are rather the exception, whereas as a rule, the relationships among family members interfere with the process of normal growth into personal independence. Every fifth student reported that his family has been disrupted by the often unexpected death of either father or mother or both of the parents. As the personal reports indicate, adolescents seem to suffer considerably from the early loss of their parents. Another remarkable figure is related to families broken by divorce. In this case the divorce orphans will usually stay with their father and consequently will be exposed to a stepmother later on. If one follows the individual descriptions stepmothers have a very poor reputation and are regarded as the incarnation of cruelty. Every third student in this sample reported that he had suffered from either an incomplete or a broken family. Parental question for authority over adolescent family members had led to generational conflicts in 15 of the cases in this category. These students reported that they were no longer willing to follow the role descriptions of the subordinate young man whose only guide is the unquestioned word or expectation of the elders. It seems from these reports that the most important issue of disagreement is modern formal education. Some parents made every effort to keep their sons at home, while the latter were convinced about advantages associated with modern education. To a dozen students the extreme poverty of parents was a remarkable handicap limiting their activities and interests and their activities related to mere hand-to-mouth-living. Lasting sicknesses of family members and the inaccessibility of adequate help also caused severe problems according to the reports.

Again some descriptions taken from the original material may illustrate the difficulties that had to be dealt with when the reporters were in their teens.

In case 909: The shock about the unexpected death of the mother is described in still very touching words.

It was during the close of our school at the month of Sene. We had prepared different activities to show to the parents. I was in grade 7 at that time and we had prepared a drama where I had to take the role of a lady. One day I was decorated and beautified with the national dress of a girl, when the guard of my former school entered the compound on a white horse. I went and greeted him. He wanted to see the school director. I showed him the way and he tied his horse to a tree

and went. After a few minutes he came out and the director called me in to tell me that my mother was terribly sick and wanted to see me just that day. I felt terribly shocked. I also was doubtful of whether my mother was alive because she had never sent a letter or a man in case of sickness before. I was not able to speak. My tongue was like tied. I began weeping. I took off my dress and wore my own suit. All my friends came and asked me but I could not answer. I simply went on weeping. I went with the guard to my village. There was a terrible rain on my way but I didn't feel it. I was eager to see my mother's face alive. I asked the guard and he assured me that she was alive but terribly sick. When we reached the village the man told me to accompany him to his house in order to eat first. We had an argument since I wanted first to see the face of my mother. While we still were arguing a neighbour lady came weeping and embraced me. Then I knew that my mother was dead already. I could'nt weep. I just run to our house. There were many people. Mother was absent. I got her dress hanging on the wall and I put it on my head and began weeping till midnight. I didn't see her dead body because it was buried before my arrival. The next morning we went to the church, where she was buried. There I rolled on her grave, cried, wept, scratched the grave to add myself to her but I was not able to. I used to love my mother very much and she loved me too since I was her last son. She died when I was fourteen.

That breaking up of marital ties by divorce because of the wife's infertility does affect the children in the family becomes evident in case 611. This case also throws a highlight on priorities of values. It seems that there is more emphasis put on the quantity of children than regard given to the psychological welfare of those already in the family.

I was the only son to my parents; thus I had too much care at home. There was a special maid employed to look after me. But when I was 10 years old my parents divorced because my father insisted that in order to get more children, he should marry another woman.

From time my stepmother came she treated me badly. I always had to fetch water from a river, which was about 2 km. away. On Saturdays and Sundays I had to look after the cows we had. When I returned from school I had to look after my younger brother and sister. I also had to clean the house and to wash our clothes.

I was almost a servant at home. Although my father knew how the stepmother was treating me, he never told her to treat me as her son.

I do not like to recall the days I stayed with my stepmother because they were the most problematic years I had in life. I hate my stepmother and I have never visited her after my 8th grade National Examination. In my school I never had any contact with my classmates, because even during recess I had to do my homework which I could not do at home because of the lack of time. Thus I cannot remember a day when I played with my friends.

Dissagreement between the youth and the parental authority seems to arouse very strong emotions and may even result in drastic actions on the side of the son.¹¹ In case 622 a period of tension between father and son is described which also illustrates a state of ambivalence and confusion towards future.

At the age of 15 I started hating my father of his refusal to take me to the government schools in Addis. Although I became a shepherd I didn't forget about the schools there. I heard that one of my cousins became a teacher in St. Joseph and another joined the Ethio-France Railway. I started to refuse watching the cattle or to do any other thing. I started to wonder on the road and came home only for lunch. Most afternoons I went to bed and thought what to become in the future. My desire was unstable. When I saw a plane I wanted to become a pilot, but I was also afraid of becoming a pilot because I heard that pilots never fast and this was against my religion. Sometimes I dreamt of becoming a high school student under the care of His Majesty. Sometimes I wanted to become a priest and a holy man free from sin and then again I thought of marrying a beautiful and rich girl like the picture of Our Lady. At that time I thought every rich man was also very happy. I didn't know the bitterness of the world.

After this confusing period I asked my father to let me go to Addis and find some possibility of learning. He didn't refuse my question because he was relieved to get

11. Levine, D. N. *Wax and Gold*, Chicago, 1965. pp. 107.

TABLE III

Reported experiences related to extra familial social relations

Rank	Positive experiences	N	%	Rank	Experiences related to frustrations and stress	N	%
1	Happy heterosexual relationships	17	53.1	1	Frustrating experiences with first attempts towards heterosexual relations	15	44.1
2	Being popular and appreciated among peers	8	25.0	2	Experiences of agressions and physical attacks	10	29.1
3	Anticipating future chances of a wider range of activities	7	21.9	3	Experiences of social deprivation and loneliness	9	26.5
	Total	32	100.0		Total	34	100.0

rid of me. I left home after kissing my parents. My home is 140 kms. away from Addis Ababa. I had to travel on foot since I had no money for a bus and my friend who was with me didn't have anything either. After 3½ days we reached Addis Ababa.

That the eldest children very often are watched and supervised by strict parental authority shows in contribution 612.

I am the first of the children in the family. Until I was twenty my father was very harsh to me and I hardly had any time to relax and play with others. I was expected to go to school in time and to come back home in time without going anywhere else.

3. The non-familial social relations appear less problematic in the reports. Positive and problem-oriented descriptions are nearly equal in number.

The greatest frequency of reports concerning happy experiences as well as frustrations is found under the theme of heterosexual relationships. In a society where sexual activities are so greatly tabooed, and as a common pattern secretly conducted,¹² heterosexual issues are also topic number one in this category of contribution.¹³ Heterosexual relations based on mutual agreement seem to be a source of great happiness, as they are likewise a source of remarkable depression and tension if associated with obstacles like an unresponsive though adored girl or fathers who violently attempt to defend the honour of their daughters. The experience of being popular and appreciated by friends is usually described as contributing to greater self-assurance. Heterosexual relations may lead to various causes of rivalry even among friends. A number of students report quite dangerous aggressive acts that must have been considerably out of proportion in order to cause memorable problems. That being appreciated outside ones own family as a real need is reflected in those contributions that counter around experiences of rejection, absence of recognition and social deprivation and show their frustrating and disturbing effects.

Report 901 illustrates an uncomplicated and enjoyable relation with a girlfriend.

12. Levine, D. N. *Wax and Gold*, Chicago, 1965, p. 99

13. Gabremaskal Asfaha, *Sex problems of A. A. Male High School Students A. A.*, 1970 Unpublished Thesis.

When I passed the eighth grade general exam I was acquainted with a friend called A. We were classmates and intimate friends in our school. There were not sufficient books for all students. So my friend and I shared one. One day we decided to study at his house together and I was introduced to my friends parents, his sister and her friend. When we studied for some hours we got tired and had to refresh ourselves by discussing with the girls. D was beautiful and calm, she had a smiling face. The way she spoke, answered questions and the way she gave opinions about certain topic attracted me very much. I found she looked intelligent and wise. When I went home, I always remembered her. I couldn't do anything except thinking of her. When I met my friend the other day I asked him to tell me everything about D. He told me that her mother was sick. I advised him to go and see her house. D. received us warmly. This gave me a good chance to know her more. After a short while D. sat for her eighth grade exam too and after joined my school. We were pleased about this. She and I met very often, and we were soon in love. She told her parents that I will come to her house to help her with her studies. Her parents liked me very much and treated me as their own son.

The change from feeling oneself inferior among peers to being a respected member of the class is illustrated in contribution 940:

When I joined the new class I had no friend. The way they played was new to me and I had never seen that round thing they played with: the ball. My way of walking was different from theirs, and all of them laughed and mocked at me. For that reason I considered myself as inferior and remained alone for some time.

After three months the teacher gave us a formal class test. I stood first in Amharic and Maths. Our teacher praised me in front of the class and gave me a pencil and an exercise book. From that day on I studied hard and was getting good results. So my classmates stopped mocking at me and joking at me and began to show respect. They even started to ask me questions. Some of them became my intimate friends. Since then my moral improved and the inferiority complex was forgotten.

How adolescents feel who have to face strong sanctions against their first attempts to establish a friendship with a girl is shown by case 618:

When I was 16 years of age I was in the 7th grade, and I was a student very much obeying the regulations of the school; girls never have to shake hands with boys and never to talk to each other. One day however I started a friendship with a girl who was my classmate. There were several factors that helped us to become friends. Her parents became our neighbour, so we had the same way to school. One day a boy of the 4th. grade watched us when we came to school playing and talking to each other. The boy told to the director what he had seen, and the director was annoyed. A general assembly of students and teacher was called in, and in front of this audience both of us received 20 lashes each. The news, of course, quickly spread over the village that we had committed a rude act. Our parents punished us too, and we were blamed by all.

If communication with others is grossly limited and therefore there is no experience of social acceptance severe feelings of loneliness if not depression result (910):

After receiving my diploma at the age of 19 I was assigned to teach in one of the northern provinces. At first I faced the great problem of living alone, which I never had faced before since I only spoke Amharic and English and a little bit of other languages spoken in Harar and Shoa. I didn't understand anyone whenever I went to shops or to the market. At home my servant did everything different from what I had asked and in school I had difficulties to make the children understand my subjects. In addition to that I had to get adjusted to the traditional customs of that area. Although they were in fact not so much different from what I was used to, language and locality made it very different for me. I always felt lonely.

4. As mentioned above, a number of contributions were, because of the great variety of contents, not classifiable under one single heading. In this category which perhaps best could be called: "Life as a challenge and threat", are about 20 reports dealing with happy and pleasurable experiences and four times as many referring to all sorts of danger and threats students were exposed to during their teens.

The main themes related to happy experiences were about occasions that allowed young individuals to learn by personal experiences such as coming to new exciting places like the big towns in Ethiopia, first experiences of flying and the development of new interests.

TABLE IV

Life as a challenge and a threat

Rank	Positive Experiences	N	%	Rank	Experiences related to frustration and stress	N	%
1	Access to new dimensions of life	11	55.0	1	Exposure to severe accidents	31	39.7
2	Experiences of religious conversion	5	25.0	2	Experiences of extreme fear	14	18.0
3	Experiences related to luck	4	20.0	3	Dangers from poor hygienic living conditions	14	18.0
				4	Exposure to threat and aggression	9	11.5
				5	Perception of signs of physical maturation	7	9.0
				6	Bad luck	3	3.8
	Total	20	100.0		Total	78	100.0

Quite impressive were also the reports concerning religious conversions. In most of these cases the conversion was really a turning point in life and marked by deep feelings of personal belongingness and satisfaction. Lucky incidents of course were related to friendly memories.

Life is characterized by uncertainty. This could be the main tenor of the descriptions of accidents, lasting sicknesses, sudden dangers and nightly fears students reported having been exposed to.

Every fifth student reported severe accidents like the overturning of cars in dangerous mountainous streets or of being carried off by flooding rivers when it was more or less a matter of luck rather than personal efficiency that they survived. Fourteen reports reveal states of extreme fear aroused by the presence of wild animals at night or by overwhelming new experiences. Poor hygienic living conditions and the absence of adequate medical care for the peasant were mentioned by fourteen students as very frustrating and discouraging experiences. Exposure to threat and aggression like robbery or the burning down of the thatched house that required both self-defence and fast insight and understanding of the situational dangers were reported by another nine individuals. As mentioned above, facts related to sexual maturation are highly tabooed; this is partly illustrated by the self-descriptions of seven students who perceived the advent of physical maturation as very difficult facts to deal with.

It would surely be very interesting to illustrate all these themes by quotations from the original reports. The example selected mirrors different aspects of terrifying experiences (934).

It was a bright sunny Thursday morning. Ethiopian Easter was near. That day my mother asked me to go and to bring some fire wood. With two other boys I went to a nearby forest not far from the farm land of a wizard. After a while of picking up wood I saw some nice pieces leaning over a tree as though someone had put it there. There were also leaves put on this wood thus indicating that the wood belonged to someone. There is a belief among people in this area that nobody should take things away otherwise something bad will happen to him. Since my parents do not believe in such and I therefore didn't either, I took that wood and we shared it. Suddenly we heard the hissing of snakes. We ran away but snakes were being thrown over our heads. When we

returned to the place the same things happened again. In the end we decided to go and to take axes. Since this time we heard no hissing. We decided to pick up the wood and to leave the place. When I reached to the wood, I had collected, I found a big snake lying between the pieces. Crying and shouting we ran away taking only our axes with us. We were shivering and trembling and our hearts beating strongly. We told all to our parents but no one believed us. That night I hardly could sleep. Now and then I was awake. I still remember that day and I still cry and shout whenever I see a snake, even a dead one.

As mentioned this study was undertaken to gain some insight into the process of adolescence as reflected by the personal reports of 150 Ethiopian diploma students of HSIU. The method of retrospective descriptions had purposely been chosen to avoid undue emphasis on problems lived through during these years, and to allow students to mention whatever they considered memorable enough to be reported as a significant experience during their adolescent years.

As the findings show, most of the self reports centered around problemladen experiences, whereas only a relatively small fraction of descriptions dealt with experiences that were related to the satisfaction of the basic needs of self-preservation and self-enhancement. With these results, the study is in line with other attempts to explore the situation of adolescents in Ethiopia (Cox, Gabremaskal Asfaha, Gebeyehu Dagne, Haile Wolde Michael, Tecele Tesfazghi and Teshome G. Wagaw et. al.).

Most of the problematic experiences were related to events in the family regarding social cohesion, socio-economic conditions and generational conflicts, which also were emphasized by other authors (Gebeyehu Darge, Sahle Selassie and Teshome G. Wagaw et. al).

Next in frequency were problems related to attempts to secure education and training. Difficulties directly related to their existence as a student and a beginner in the professional world were found, besides tension that resulted from the inability to get access to existing educational possibilities. It seems that progress in formal education sharpens difficulties that arise from the interaction between these adolescents and established traditional authorities (Gebeyehu Dagne, Levine, Shack, Sahle Selassie). Very often there were diverging attitudes

towards the value of formal education reported, parents appearing much more reserved than their sons (Haile Wolde Michael, Sahle Selassie, Tecele Tesfazghi) in that respect.

Nearly as many problems were reported about life and living circumstances in general. It seems as if life itself was a permanent threat to the psychological wellbeing of the young Ethiopians in this study. In many instances it was emphasized that such past threats and dangers to security and life are still in effect to the present day. Among these problems was fear caused by accidents as well as quite a number of irrational fears.

As for the natural development of sexual maturation, these adolescents didn't seem to having been prepared, they reacted to it with feelings of severe stress and discomforts (Giel, Gebeyehu Dagne, Gabremaskal Asfaha). Among the serious problems mentioned was also the absence of adequate hygienic living conditions and medical help in case of serious sicknesses (Teshome G. Wagaw et. al.)

Social relationships outside the family appeared comparatively speaking, as less problematic, although also in these relations traditional values and attitudes were the causes of severe personal depression. There is, however, evidence that in this group of young Ethiopians social relations to peers were more satisfactory than any other social relationship (Gebeyehu Dagne, Gebremaskal Asfaha, Levine).

Summarizing the facts found out in this study, one can say that the environment of this group of young Ethiopian university students is characterized by a great number of obstacles and barriers that contribute remarkably to the painful process of growing up in a transitional society and thus require a considerable degree of stamina to resist. The difficulties are mainly related to the socio-economic situation and the infrastructure of developing countries and to the existence of persisting traditional ways of behaviour and attitudes.

These facts have been reported by a group of young Ethiopians who proved to be successful at least in their educational achievement. It may throw some light too upon the situation of those adolescents who for many reasons cannot surpass existing barriers.

Any attempt to provide adequate education for the young generation of present day Ethiopia has to take such facts into consideration.

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