SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Agonies of girl domestic workers (GDWs) migrated from rural areas to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Abstract: This article was aimed to explore the agonies that girl domestic workers experienced at the hands of traffickers and employers in Addis Ababa city. Qualitative research approach was employed to generate robust data meant for the study purposes. Snowball sampling technique was used to pursue girls through the network of their peers until the data saturates. In-depth interviews were conducted with girls and their guardians while key informant interviews were held with child experts. The study posits that girls were enticed to join the domestic workforce with the hope to eke-out their impoverished family's livelihood. Recruitment process of rural girls for urban domestic work has mysteriously been perpetrated by the chained network of traffickers, parents, employers, and peers with adaptive mundus operandi to the informality of the process. There has also been a circumstance whereby girls were bonded with their parents' debit particularly when recruited through acquaintance networks and as a result, denied appropriate privileges for their domestic services. It is established that employers manifested distorted perception of domestic servitude towards GDW and hence were punitive. The study further unveiled that GDWs were restricted from the public gaze and as a result, experienced exploitative working conditions and sexual abuse. The study implies absence of a protective system that safeguards girls from power asymmetry with employers and thus, strongly recommends for the policy and legislative framework that ameliorates child DW.

Subjects: Sociology of the Family; Sociology of Work & Industry; Gender Studies

Keywords: Agonies; girls; domestic work; migrated; rural

1. Introduction

Girl domestic work is one of the most common forms of child labor globally and is considered a form of modern-day slavery (Black, 2002; UNICEF, 1999). There are an estimated 17.2 million child domestic workers in the world, and the vast majority are girls (ILO, 2012). According to estimates for 2008 by ILO statistical information and monitoring programme on child labour (SIMPOC), some 15.5 million children aged 5 to 17 are in domestic work of which 11.3 million (73% of them) are girls (IPEC, 2011, p. 28). Domestic service is now alleged to be the largest employment category of girls under the age of sixteen worldwide given communities distorted perception about limited values of girl's education (Flores & Oebanda, 2006). When one comes to Ethiopia, about 18% of children aged 5–11 and 40% of children aged 12–14 were in this sector of which majority were girls (CSA, 2011). Domestic work is considered a perpetuation of traditional female roles and responsibilities within and outside the household. It is perceived as part of girls'
apprenticeship for their later marriage life, and thus, accrued low recognition as an economic activity.

Child domestic work is a work undertaken by children under the legal minimum working age, or by children above the legal minimum age but below the age of 18 under slavery-like conditions (ILO, 2012). Domestic work shelves prospective development of girls by reinforcing marginalization of females in the society. It also keeps girls out of the school, confined to home, socially alienated, and burdened with excessive domestic chores (Black, 2002). Pankhurst et al. (2015) indicates that living in strange urban areas can increase rural girls’ alienation from social networks that could protect them from psychological stress. GDWs are deprived of opportunities to make networks, lives away from their families, controlled by their employers, invisible to authorities, frequently deprived of basic rights and social services, deprived of protection from sexual and physical abuses (Thi et al., 2021).

GDW is distinguished from other types of child labor in that it is a restless nature of job (Black, 1997, p. 10). Having unspecified working hours, girl domestic workers should remain available the whole day and the whole week (Black, 1997), which can cause sleep deprivation and exhaustion. However, according to World Health Organization (WHO), one adult person should sleep at least 8 hours in a day and for children sleeping hours should be more (Matricciani et al., 2013). It is also common for girl domestic workers to fed leftovers which can lead to malnutrition, a condition that is detrimental to proper child growth. GDWs are subject to harsh methods of treatment and forfeiture like yelling, deprivation of food, denial of wage etc. (Thi et al. (2021) for perceived misbehavior or poor performance at work. Thus, employer’s relational approach towards GDW is unfriendly and girls develop a sense of domestic servitude which further propel them to take females marginalization for granted.

The vast majority of GDW in Ethiopia are found in urban areas but originate from poor rural family backgrounds. Following migration from rural areas, most girls enter domestic workforce because, it is a readily available form of work requiring little or no education (Gamlin et al., 2013). After their first trimester as a domestic worker, a significant proportion of girls’ transition to commercial sex work (Thi et al. (2021) to get rid of employers’ coercive control and toiling work conditions.

According to Ethiopia’s policy of education, every child reaching the age of schooling should be enrolled (World Bank, 2018). However, this provision is not materialized on the ground for children joining the domestic workforce at an early age (Mulugeta, 2015). To date, the problem has received scant attention in the research and few available studies are not consistent on the agonies of GDWs in Ethiopia. For instance, in the study conducted in three Ethiopian cities, 49% of domestic workers, all of whom were female, had never been to school compared to 13% of nondomestic workers (Erulkar & Ferede, 2009). The same study found that domestic workers are vulnerable to sexual abuse, and they are nearly twice as likely to experience nonconsensual sex as girls who were not domestic workers. On the other hand, Omoni and Ijeh (2010) are against the total eradication of child labor worldwide stressing the contributions of these children to the livelihood of their families. Short-term studies such as these do not show full trajectories of GDWs and subtle changes over time. Few publications were also done on CDW in countries like Nigeria and Bangladesh in their own contexts and dynamics (e.g., Camacho, 1999; Jacquemin, 2004, 2006). However, an international publication on CDW in Ethiopia is meager and the central thesis of this article is therefore, exploring the agonies of GDWs accentuating on their recruitment situation, relational approaches of employer towards GDW and the nature of working conditions to thereby suggest a middle ground reformatory approaches towards ameliorating the agonies in Ethiopian context.

1.1. Objectives of the study
The main objective of this study was to explore the agonies of girl domestic workers: the case of rural migrant girls in Addis Ababa city. Specifically, the study aims to:
• Assess factors underpinning migration of rural girls to Addis Ababa city and their recruitment process for domestic work.
• Investigate interplay of employers' relational approaches towards GDWs and GDWs working conditions.

1.2. **Significance of the study**

The study makes an immense contribution to the better understanding of modern slavery manifestations in GDW. It sheds new light on the agonies of GDW which underpins the reinforcement of traditional gender disparities for the policy makers and relevant government sectors directly concerned with the issues. This study also provides new insights into the development of strategies, programs, projects, and legislative frameworks that could deal with the agony aspect of GDW and other forms of modern slavery. It would also be the platform to draw the agonies of GDWs to the attention of NGOs, civil society organizations and international communities for intervention. It can further serve as a springboard for large scale study by other researchers in the area. Finally, the study could be the base for the development of bylaws and contractual agreement drafts that govern the relationship between employers and GDWs.

1.3. **Theoretical framework**

In this study, intersectionality theory (Walby et al., 2012) was used to frame the analysis of the interlocking system of oppression for GDWs. Intersectionality theory in feminist analysis deals with the interplay of age, gender, class, ethnicity, disabilities, educational status, locational disadvantages, structural and systemic issues in shaping exploitative working conditions of GDWs and their distorted relationship with employers which the researcher used as a guide in the analysis part. The researcher preferred to deal with the interlock of variables contributing to GDWs oppression because of variables inextricable linkage and treating in nexus sounded substantial than treating in a piecemeal fashion. Furthermore, intersectionality theory was preferred to test the interplay of girls’ vulnerabilities with their recruitment processes and employers’ relational approaches towards GDWs and GDWs working conditions.

1.4. **Research methods**

This study targeted GDWs living in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia and African Union sit Headquarter. Given its strategic central location and home for diversity, Addis Ababa is an attractive poll hosting large number of GDWs (Mulugeta & Eriksen, 2016) with no or less state regulation on their employment and working conditions. This article accentuates on girl domestic workers as a target group, who are much more structurally constrained than their male counterparts (Jensen, 2013). Search of literature reveals that most of migrant girls are working as domestic workers which different scholars discussed as a feminized sphere of employment (Camacho, 1999; Forrester-Kibuga, 2000; Jacquemin, 2004; Rubenson et al., 2004). (ILO, 2004) also stated that the overwhelming of girls in child domestic work accounts for 90%, while boys account for 10%. It was thus, decisive to target girl domestic workers shouldering burdens of abusive working conditions as an apprenticeship to the perpetuation of historical women marginalization.

Qualitative research approach was used to outreach GDWs and collect cache data. In-depth interviews were applied to collect data from GDWs, and their guardians while key informant interviews were conducted with child experts withdrawn from BWSA (bureau of women and social affairs) and NGOs of Freedom Fund and Save the Children for the data triangulation purposes. Qualitative approach (in-depth interview) was necessitated to generate thick data from few accessible girls due to the difficulty of accessing more GDWs.

Snowball sampling technique was applied to contact GDWs and their guardians through a chained network of accessible children until the data saturates. Snowball sampling was selected due to the characteristics of hard-to-reach GDWs (Olayiwola, 2021) since workplaces are private and restricted from the public. Accordingly, 6 children were met through the network of accessible
children who have already transitioned to sex businesses. Overall, 19 girls were reached of which 13 were former DWs and 6 are current DWs. Thirteen children previously worked as DWs are currently in different businesses i.e., 9 in sex businesses and 4 in construction sector as a daily laborer. Parallely, 3 adults of employers and 2 adults of child parents (through phone) were snowballed through the network of interviewed GDWs for the in-depth interview. Finally, 4 child experts were purposely withdrawn from the government sector of BWSA, and international NGOs of Freedom Fund and Save the Children for the key informant interview.

The researcher employed translators and approached girls in the language that they speak for trust building and clarity of the data collected. Participants were given freedom to explain their views in metaphors which were later transcribed under different themes for the convenience of analysis. Data were clustered according to its similarities under the two themes in line with the study objectives prior to the start of analysis. Finally, thematized data were analyzed through the construction of narration which was synchronously substantiated by a review of related literature.

Contacted children were approached friendly with their consent/assent by explaining to them that all information they provide is meant for the mere research purposes. Interviews were held in the public spaces like cafeteria, church and on the street with child safeguarding principles in place to avoid any harm to the girls and their jobs. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to all research participants. Adult participants and girls above 15 years old were consented while, girls below 15 years old were assented for the data provision as a courtesy to start the interview. Concomitant to the girl’s assent, some guardians were consented for girls below 15 ages under the circumstances it doesn’t cause any harm to the child and their job.

As revealed in Table 1 below, age wise, child participants involved in the study ranged from 11 to 18 while adults ranged from 30 to 60. Girls of different ethnic backgrounds were contacted despite the majority being Oromos. Among those contacted, circa 70% of girls were Orthodox Christians while Muslims and Protestants accounted for 10% each. The remaining 10% accounted for other religions like Waqefata, Catholic and those who didn’t want to specify.

This study might not be generalizable as samplings were taken up to mere data saturation due to the difficulty of accessing the target group from which representative sample would be withdrawn. However, the researcher believes that the article ostensibly reveals the palpable nature of GDWs in Ethiopian urban context.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. Vulnerabilities and recruitment processes of rural girls for DW

The practice of recruiting girls for domestic work in exchange for basic needs of survival has been an important historical reality (Anderson, 2007; Pérez, 2020). Rural girls are enticed by multifaceted socio-economic problems to join DW in the urban setting. Family unemployment and impoverishment, parental divorce and death are among the prime factors instigating the movement of rural girls to urban areas for domestic work. All interviewees (19/19) stressed their family’s poverty as a common factor underlying the why of joining DW with the hope to help their family back, thereby seeking some changes in their life. Girl domestic workers are more likely to be from a single parent household or totally parentless because of death. Consistent with this, (ILO, 2004) stated death of parents, illiteracy of parents, ailment of parents, and ignorance about the pertinence of education as some of the pushing factors for children to join domestic work. There is also a scenario whereby girls escape abuse from stepfathers at home in rural villages (Camacho, 1999, p. 66). A girl, whose age is 11, reported the following:

I was born in Sendafa Bake, Oromia region. My father died at an early age when I was 4. Then, my mother gave me to a relative living in Addis Ababa with the assumption that I would be better educated and cared, after she remarried to my stepfather. However, I was
| Ethnicity | Religions of All Age Participants (11–60) | Age distribution | Total |
|-----------|------------------------------------------|------------------|-------|
|           | Orthodox | Protestant | Muslim | Other | Female | Male | Female |
| Oromia    | 9        | 2          | 1      | 1     | 10     | 2    | 3      |
| Amhara    | 4        | 2          |        |       | 3      | 1    | 2      |
| SNNP      | 3        | 1          | 2      | 1     | 4      | 1    |        |
| Tigray    | 3        |            | 1      |       | 2      |      |        |
| Total     | 19/70%   | 3/10%      | 3/10%  | 3/10% | 19     | 4    | 5      | 28/100%|

Source: (Author data, 2022)
denied appropriate care, restricted from the school, forced to do domestic activities being discriminated from their own children. I was not paid for my work because I am counted as a family member though denied the family privileges.

Child domestic workers are denied appropriate recognition for their services as a work because, it is often associated with familial acquaintance in which urban households recruit the child through relative network with the promise of foster care. For instance, (Gamlin et al., 2013) states that there is often a leaning to consider CD worker as a family member. Though there is an initial promise, children are not entitled with the right of foster care once joined urban household. In Oromo peoples’ culture, children are transferred from initial family of birth to receiving household through “Gudifacha”, meaning adoption, a culture that endows the child with full right to claim fatherhood and motherhood of receiving parent. Negeri (2006) studied “Gudifacha” practice as a child problem intervention in Oromo society. Children are transferred with aesthetic culture of families gathering with relevant stakeholders like Abbaa Gada, Hadha Siqe, and elders in place whereby receiving families sworn to properly upbring adopted children as their own children and grants them with full right of parenthood including resource inheritance after death. None of GDWs contacted in this study passed in the tradition of “Gudifacha” though, some of them were brought through the network of relatives from surrounding Ormooa region of Addis Ababa with the promise that they would be educated while also providing inhouse support. This trick of bringing children from acquaintance network without “Gudifacha” culture is meant to deny appropriate payment for GDWs while also denying the rights that “Gudifacha” tradition endows. Construction of familial belonging created convenient way of exploiting and maintaining control over child domestic workers whilst denying them access to the benefits available to consanguineal family members (Glenn, 1985). Thus, GDWs condition needs to be revamped through contractual agreement binding employers and girls recruited without foster care culture like “Gudifacha” so that, working conditions i.e., nature of activities, working times, break times, education, payment, and other privileges would be governed bylaws and closely monitored by frontline government structures. One girl also reported the following:

I was born and grown-up in the rural area of Sululta Woreda. I was told by my mother to go to Addis Ababa and engage in some daily labor to change my life and support my family’s food while I was 13 because they are poor. I was happy to get my mother’s consent to move to Addis Ababa because it is a beautiful city. I was motivated because I saw other friends who moved to Addis Ababa change their dresses when they came back to the village for a family visit. Then, I went to Sululta town to meet a broker and ask for the facilitation to transfer me to Addis Ababa. Accordingly, the broker found me a job as a domestic worker and the employer came and picked me from Sululta town broker office a week later. There was no formal agreement signed or salary deal held except she told me that she would pay me 700 ETB per a month.

Data reveals the presence of family and peer pressure behind the exodus of girls to urban areas in search of job which is predominantly domestic work to eke-out their family’s livelihood as 11/19 interviewees mentioned. Children are advised by their parents to go and hunt their chances because they are brought up accepting what parents decide for them (Blanchet, 1996, p. 15). The motive behind parents’ encouragement is that CDW can contribute significantly to the livelihoods of destitute families in rural areas (e.g., Camacho, 1999, p. 668; Rani & Roy, 2005, pp. 10, 15, 22). Children are also deceived by the beauty, skyscraping buildings, and other glamorous things in the city. The role of traffickers facilitating employment process is also underpinning the flow of girls to the city. Though Ethiopia is known for originating cross-border child trafficking, internal trafficking overwhelms, and it is most often harnessed with domestic work, commercial sex work and daily labor. Traffickers often change their mundus-operandi to finetune with their illegality and government regulation. They are really experienced in inspiring girls by lobbying and telling them success stories. If children fail to afford trafficker’s commission, they would be bonded with it until they finish paying back from their salary every month.
Girls coming from rural areas are employed at readily offered salaries (Jacquemin, 2004) and hence, do not make a salary and job deal. Making a deal could cost them extra unemployment time which enforces children to accept the available offer. It is implicated that there is no formal agreement held between employers and children or their guardians. Though traffickers promise protection for girls during recruitment (M. Bourdillon, 2009), they turn a blind eye once collected commission and send girls to the city. It means that girls are enduring human right violations at the hands of employers and traffickers. One expert working in the bureau of women and social affairs said the following:

Rural girl recruitment is subtle enough to cope up with its informality. Children are not well consulted about the process. They are simply told by their peers or traffickers that they would be better educated and get rid of the primitive rural lifestyle when they moved to the city. Sometimes parents cooperate by paying commission to traffickers and urging children to go with the hope that they would benefit from the salary of their children. Girls are told with false promises for inspiration while practical challenges they could face are hidden.

It is unveiled that the recruitment process of girls for urban domestic work is mysteriously perpetrated by chained network of traffickers, parents, and peers with adaptive mundus-operandi to the informality of the process. GDWs are recruited from rural areas by the network of traffickers and employers to serve in private households, hotels, brothels, and massage parlors (Tade, 2014). Traffickers are networked to recruit and supply these children to their clients (employers) based on demand. Employers inform traffickers of the type of children they need with the type of businesses they run which is a ground for traffickers to supply the children befitting with the nature of employer’s business for an attractive commission. This is typically the case when beautiful girls are recruited for brothels and massage parlors as clients prefer fresh recruits i.e., in Amharic, yebet lij (Molland, 2010).

Data reveals that traffickers deceive girls by telling them promising prospects while pragmatic challenges they could come through are hidden. Girls are inspired by false promises of better education and civilized living conditions in Addis Ababa which they consider as a golden opportunity to get rid of impoverished living conditions in the rural areas. This implies that the recruitment process is not in the best interest of the girls. There is a propensity to lobby and convince children so that they would move with assent. However, it is true that girls under 18 are not fully responsible for themselves; rather, custodians are there to guide and help them in their day-to-day life decisions. Very often, as Woodhead also notes, it is the support of a significant adult parent or peers that could be a key risk or protection factor to enter the domestic workforce (Woodhead, 1999). Even, in the context children asserted, their decision could be against their best interest when seen from their long-term benefits. This implies that the recruitment process takes place without exhaustive analysis of what is in the best interest of the girl, entailing multi-stakeholders like custodians, the girls themselves, social workers and significant others’ which often underlie the appalling fate of girls after being recruited as domestic workers.

It is demonstrated that parents commission traffickers to find jobs for their daughters in Addis Ababa as they would be relieved from the burden of educating and taking care of girls once they sent-off. This could also be to gain their girls support as a livelihood subsidy once girls become a domestic worker and started earning a wage. Furthermore, there is a motive to escape the shame of living with “leftovers” once their girls are not married at an early age. It is culturally encouraged to marry girls at an early age and those failed to marry early bears the consequences of negative sentiment from the community (Aychiluhm et al., 2021). Parents are susceptible to labeling and segregation if their girls are out of the marriage market. A girl is often viewed as a burden, although much more to the poor and uneducated family than the middle class (Jensen, 2013). Thus, sending girls to the city is the way out of shame and palliate parents from the public sentiment.
On the other hand, there is distorted perception that educating girl is a worthless investment among the rural communities. Rural community believes that once girl has married, she will leave to join another family and hence, she would not serve back here own family. As a result, parents prefer to send girls to urban areas for domestic work than sending them to school. This implies, girls have two options in the rural areas: one, to marry at an early age if they get a husband and the other is to flee to cities in search of job for survival. When they move to city, it is likely that they would first work as domestic servant and later transition to sex businesses (Thi et al., 2021). Girls exhausted by domestic exploitation consider sex work as an independent business where they enjoy freedom. Girls recruited from rural areas are less likely to join sex work at an initial stage given shames attributed to vulgar sex work by rural cultural norms. However, during stay as a domestic worker, they would filter alternative jobs in the city which dares them to resort to sex work as a survival means. One girl whose age is 18 and transitioned to sex businesses reported the following:

I left domestic work and joined sex work because I didn't want to go back to rural life as I am not beautiful and cannot marry on time. The community perceives girls should marry early or move to cities and determine their destiny. Girls that did not marry earlier are considered unwanted. She would be susceptible to gossiping and the way out is to leave the rural residence and try her life chance at town. Plus, rural communities do not value girls’ education. They consider educating a girl as a worthless investment, because she wouldn’t pay back as she would marry and join the other families.

2.2. Interplay of employers’ relational approaches towards GDWs and GDWs working conditions

One girl, whose age is 13, reported the following:

I am a domestic servant for a woman head household in Addis Ababa. She has young children who are older than me. Her children segregated me in the house. I am not allowed to play, eat, and sleep with them because they humiliate and consider me as unclean. She is also mad at me. She beats me, yells at me, curses me and gets annoyed for minor things like failing to finish my tasks on time. She forces me to do things that are beyond my age. For instance, if I broke glass, she cut my salary. She doesn’t give me the love and respect she gives to her children.

There is a blatant difference in how the employers perceive childhood for their own children and for the child who serves them (Jensen, 2013). Child workers are not allowed to play with those of employer’s because they are busy with indoor chores and lack free time to play. Children see GDWs ridiculed by their parents and replicate the same by discriminating GDW from playing together. Employer’s children are being socialized into treating the children working in their household as inferior which they learn from their parents (Jensen, 2013). GDWs are considered unclean and playing with them affects the status of the employer’s children. Wasiuzzaman and Wells (2010) describe this phenomenon as “pollution taboos”, which reflect the workers’ marginal position in the household. Girl maid is required to show her lower status by her dress and fawn behavior to employing families (Blanchet & Zalman, 2004, pp. 29–30). GDWs also receive aggressive reactions from employing parents and children. Employers often scold and find faults to punish GDW than properly coaching them as a guardian. Although some of the employers abstained from using offensive language with their child domestic workers many scolded and used humiliating terms (e.g., Jensen, 2013).

Many of the child domestic workers (15/19) stated that their employers were punitive. It is revealed that GDWs are at risk of having their salary cut if they commit minor mistakes at work. Employers do not show sympathy to GDWs like they do for their own children. Moreover, they force girls to do work that is beyond their capacity and penalize them when they fail to meet the deadline. Analogously, qualitative studies suggest that young women working in domestic employment are exposed to physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual abuses, are treated badly (Blagbrough, 2008), usually work long hours, and feel subordinated to their employer
(Camacho, 1999; Jacquemin, 2004). This implies that the employer’s relational approach towards GDW is punitive and aggressive which affects their prospect of psycho-social development. Constant denigration and neglect over a time falter the children’s defenses and self-respect (Stegmann, 2003, pp. 25–6). Cross-sectional study of 3139 Brazilian children found domestic service to be a risk factor for behavioral maladjustment (Benvegnu et al., 2005), while a study of child labor in Kenya found child domestic workers to be prone to a range of psychosocial disarrays (Bwibo & Onyango, 1987). This implies that employer’s distorted perception of domestic servitude towards GDW underpins their punitive approach and maltreatment that is akin to slavery which is consistent with the idea of (Black, 2002, i–ii). One NGO expert expressed the following:

Employers perceive that GDWs are slaves and thus expected to be fawn to their employers. Children cannot say no to any order from their Ittiyoe or Gashe. GDWs are perceived to be tireless and thus expected to work hard to satisfy their owners. They are coerced even under the condition that it is beyond their capacity. Girls are disturbed amidst the night to wake up and do something that the employers need.

It is revealed that girl domestic workers are perceived slaves and employers’ approach towards them is coercive. Girls are fawn to employers’ order regardless of their interest and capacity. GDW calls their employers, “Gashe”, meaning king and “Ittiyoe”, meaning princess for employing father and mother respectively. Jensen (2013) describe the relationship between CDWs and employers as semi-feudal patron whereby CDWs are alienant servant to their lords with little or no rewards. It is astonishing to see such a flagrant demonstration of modern slavery in the country where the government claims it is enforcing international instruments of safeguarding child rights. Girl domestic workers are to be put on alert 24 hours at the expenses of their break time, which is against Ethiopian law, declaring a maximum of seven working hours per day, and work prohibited before 6AM or after 10PM for working children aged 14–18 under special provisions (Erulkar & Ab Mekbib, 2007). However, this proclamation is rarely enforced to detect the possible impacts of power asymmetry between children and employers (Angeli, 2017). It means that there are no predefined activities and working times that girls have contracted at the initial stage of employment which leaves them at the mercy of their employers. Pérez and Freier (2020) found that child domestic worker exploitation ranged from working 12 hours a day, six days a week, for meager wages, and no health insurance, no paid vacations, or the possibility of studying part-time, and suffering verbal and sexual abuses. This implies, girl domestic workers are lacking legislative framework granting them with protection from their employer’s equivocal power relations. One girl, whose age is 15, reported the following:

My employer is harsh to me. Their interaction with me is outrageous. Their child also beat me and verbally abused me using sexually sensitive words. When I reported to the parents, they didn’t do anything. I simply cried because I didn’t have anywhere to go. I ate leftovers and went to bed after all the family members slept.

Almost, all interviewees (18/19) implicated that GDWs are enduring human right violations at the hands of employers. Employing parents and their children manifested aggressive behavior towards child domestic servants. Any abuse to the girl maid was left unreported since it is restricted from the public and children didn’t have orientation about their rights and where to report when violated. Angeli (2017) stressed that despite harsh treatment of child domestic workers in the hands of employers; their cases are hardly reported and monitored by law enforcing agencies. Children could cry on the spot but continue to work tolerating the pains of recurrent abuses as they do not have anywhere to go. This reveals again the absence of appropriate policy and legal framework that could protect child domestic workers from any forms of abuse.

It is disclosed that the girl maids went to bed later at night after all family members slept. It is true that children are sleeping early in the evening because they feel exhausted by the daytime...
engagements. However, they went to bed after feeding all family members and making sure that no activity was left undone. Camacho (1999, p. 63) explains that many child workers have inadequate time to sleep. They are also eating leftovers as they often eat later, and prepared food could be finished by the time they eat. This exposes girls to Severe malnutrition and sleeping disorder at an early age which in turn jeopardizes their health and physical growth. One girl, whose age is 17 stated:

I came at the age of 11 from my rural village to serve as a DWr in Addis Ababa. Usually, I wake up at 5:00AM, early in the morning and cook breakfast. After all family members ate their breakfast and deployed to school or office, I start washing cookware, clean houses, adjust bed sheets and other arrangements in the house. When I finish adjustment, lunch time is already around the corner, and I move on to lunch preparation. From 10:00AM to 1:30PM, I handle lunch preparation and provision issues. Without any break, I move on to washing clothes if any and cleaning the compound in the afternoon. By 4:30 PM, I would start dinner preparation and handle it until 8:00PM. I would then keep cleaning kitchenware until 10-11:00PM and sleep. I may wake up amidst the night if the children cry or for whatever purpose the employer needs. I do not have someone understanding and assisting in all these tasks.

Consistently, another girl, whose age is 16 stated:

My heart and spinal cord are severely affected due to activities like washing clothes, fetching water when water is not there, carrying heavy materials, taking care of elderly mother and father at home. I am the one who gets elders urine out of the house and wash their bodies and clothes on a regular basis.

It is indicated that girl domestic workers have been burdened with activities that could cause harm to their health and physical development. They are engaging in manually handled domestic chores that could cripple their physical growth. They are also caring for elders and children under unhygienic circumstances, exposing themselves to health defect. Under Ethiopian law, it is illegal for a child below the age of 14 years to engage in a wage labor (Erulkar & Ab Mekbib, 2007). However, as implied from data, this provision is rarely enforced to protect girls engaged in domestic work. Beyond its rare enforcement, the decree is ambiguous as it doesn't forbid children below the age 14 from engaging in unwaged labor. This is what Angeli (2017) stated a law overseeing the condition of child domestic worker is vague and hardly enforced to detect the possible impacts of power asymmetry between children and employers.

GDWs are under the burden of heavy tasks throughout the day, and they do not have hours off in the day. Data reveals that they are jumping from one activity to the other without any rest in between. They are also exhibiting interrupted or sleepless nights to satisfy the interest of their employer. They are handling the whole domestic chores alone or with little assistance. M.F.C. Bourdillon (2006, pp. 63–76) states that GDWs are working under heavy responsibility of being left in charge of young children, or of the home, with less support of adults. This implies, GDWs have rarely been investing in their posterity. They are not entitled to go to school. They do not have time and permission to meet and entertain with their friends which is a risk factor for psychological stress. GDWs are carrying out tasks that are beyond their capacity and their forces are being exploited from the dawn of childhood. A growing body of qualitative research corroborates the potentially harmful nature of DW for children working under exploitative condition akin to slavery (Blagbrough, 2008; Jacquemin, 2004). The difficulties with addressing GDW stems from clandestine and illegal nature of works which employers count as an opportunity to irresponsibly exploit girls.

Beyond physical and psycho-social effect, domestic work exposes girls to health risks. GDWs have been required to clean toilets and the unpleasant smell can be hazardous to their health. Looking after children, elder and sick person increases the chance of vulnerability to contagious diseases. GDWs have also access to chemicals, sharp materials, alcohols, drugs, and other risky
materials in the house that could undermine their personal safety and security. Informality of girl domestic work compromises child safeguarding principles in place which may induce long term stunted physical development. For instance, child domestic workers in Zimbabwe complained about receiving shocks from electrical equipment (M. Bourdillon, 2009).

It was also possible to come across children who praised for the betterment of food and health than in the child’s parent home, because this is provided by their employers or simply because they are living in a city where food and health facilities are more accessible (Garnier & Benefice, 2001). Bwibo and Onyango (1987, p. 100) also states that CDWs are likely to get better nutrition for those who are from destitute families. It is a sociological fact that differential experiences of girl domestic workers are partly associated with the intersectionality of employer’s status on education, class, cultural backgrounds, religious commitment and so forth.

One girl, whose age is 12, reported the following:

I do not know how much my salary was because they were paying directly to my parents. They didn't give me a single coin because they suspected that if they pay me, I will go. When I asked my father whether they were paying him or not, he told me that he was debited with their money and my service was to palliate him from the debit he was in.

Consistently, another 13 years old girl reported the following:

My employer gave me some reason to cut my salary. Sometimes, she promises to pay two months' salary at a time, but I got paid only one month. There was also a time when she borrowed money from me and hesitated to return.

It is unveiled that GDWs are bonded with their parent’s debit and not directly rewarded for their efforts from the employers. For Gamlin et al. (2013) many children are sent into domestic services as a means of lightening the burden on their parents or guardians. Employers most often finish payment deals with the guardians when girls are contracted to pay families debit through bonded services. Both parents and employers conceal information about payment from girls with the simple mystification that salary is sent to their parents. Employers also suspect that girls would escape if directly paid and denying them salary is a means to retain. This resembles what Angeli (2017) pointed out, as child domestic workers undergo confiscation of things they own like clothes and money as a punishment for their mistakes or as a means of retaining. There were also frequent problems with payment like late payment, deductions for mistakes done during work, payments given directly to guardians and promises to pay multiple months' salary at a time but denial of payment. What quagmire the issue of GDW is the absence of a protective system in place and hoodwink collaboration of actors involved i.e., parents, employers, traffickers, and little attention government paid to the issue. So, it is imperative to establish a protective system in place by awakening government sectors and working closely with potential actors mapped in the study.

One girl, whose age is 16, expressed her feelings as follows:

One day the employing father called me to his bed and asked me to massage his back. No one was in the compound except me and him. He was naked and except he covered down stair of his body part with a mini blanket. Then I massaged his back. He turned up and ordered me to massage his front. Though I told him I cannot do that he forced me to keep massaging him. Suddenly, he started touching my breast and hugged me by force to kiss me. Then I was shocked and confused with what to do. He put his hand on my mouth and shut me silent. Then he let me down after I started crying. I didn't tell the case to anybody, and it was only me and him who knew the case.

Data shows that girl workers are experiencing abuses from adult employer family members. Teenagers in DW have been either deceived or forced into premature sex. A study in West Bengal showed, over 20% of girl domestic workers had been forced or tricked into sexual
intercourse, and many others reported having been sexually abused in other ways (Ray & Iyer, 2006, pp. 14–17). An adult male in the employer’s house is likely to be lured by girls and thereby engages in harassing behavior. A study of employing families in Lima, Peru, showed that 60% of males had their first sexual experience with domestic workers (Boyden et al., 1998, p. 38). Victim girls on their side are panicked by the frustration of perpetrators because of imbalances of power dynamics. Girl abuses are often underreported as reporting the cases would risk victims’ loss of job and other retaliatory action from the perpetrators. There is also a scenario under which a housewife apprehends the case and takes repercussions of beating and firing girls under disgusting conditions. Raped children are likely to be despondent about their prospect and as a result transition to sex businesses because losing virginity is a sign of disrespect for rural girls intending to go back and marry.

One employer reported the following:

Initially, girls are decent when they come from rural villages. They are respectful and enthusiastic to do all activities given to them. However, they start developing deviant behavior as they are accustomed to urban lifestyle in gradual exposure. They would then start murmuring, disturbance, and disobedience to their employers. They often ask for salary increments, entertainment time, and schooling which are not part of the initial deal. They would then leave and go for another opportunity if those requested packages are left unadjusted.

GD Workers’ quest for their right appears as a surprise to employers which scaffold is a perception that children should be muzzled and continue working as slaves. Employers were disturbed by conscious children alerted to exploitative conditions through gradual exposure in the city. Employers sought their child workers to remain innocent and “rurales” in thought so that they would simply discharge all assignments entrusted to them without questioning. This good, the question why employers are interested in the rural girl for domestic services? As implicated, rural girls are not aware of their rights and easily tricked by the employers’ false promises due to their vulnerabilities.

According to Tade (2014), rural people are agrarian in nature and believes in hard work which rural girls adopt at an early childhood stage. Rural girls are more resilient and trusted as they are familiar with challenges and disciplined given their commitments to traditional values of respecting elders that underpins employer’s motive to select them. Rural girls’ gut to survive unpredictable circumstances accord them respect in their community (Tade, 2014). It is thus, a mind crack for employers accustomed to exploitation when children are alerted and started questioning for their rights in the gradual course of urban exposure. They label children questioning for their rights as deviant and use firing as an exit than adjusting their claims. Absence of government body intervening and diagnosing the case worsen the intricacy which is sometimes manifested in children being fired withholding their stuffs. Here is the juncture where GDW could resort to sex businesses risking themselves to multifaceted problems.

The other employer expressed his anger by a “recent increment of salary for girl domestic workers coincided with potential chance of being employed in hotel, cafeteria, and related service sectors where they could earn more in the form of tip beside their regular wages” that competes with private household demands of GDW. Children’s employment in hotels and cafeterias is advantageous in that it allows them to build friendship with customers concomitant with the advantages of being employed by educated and wealthy households (e.g., Camacho, 1999, p. 70). It provides them the chance of entrenching social relationships while reversely reduces the chance of employers’ manipulation.

It was also possible to come across employers treating GDW as their own children with parent- hood care and affection. One girl reported the following:
I am feeling at home with my employer. I am attending my school beside modest support for my mistress in return. They have opened a bank account for me, and they deposit my monthly salary in my account. They take me out for enjoyment with their children. They do not allow me to do activities that are beyond my capacity. They also buy me things like clothes, soaps and cosmetics for my personal hygiene. They take me to the clinic when I feel sick. If I were with my parents in the rural village, I wouldn't have attended my school and got those cares.

Data reveals the presence of few households (1/19) providing unequivocal treatment to GDWs the same way they treat their own children which is consistent with M.F.C. Bourdillon (2006, p. 801) finding stating that few children spoke appreciatively of employers treating them like their own children, even to the extent of providing guidance on behavior. It is also stated that in the Philippines and Peru, child domestic workers, who manage to combine education with work, appear to have a smooth relationship with their employers, are enthusiastic about what they do in their lives (Gamlin et al., 2013). This reaffirms the intersectionality of girls and employers’ class, age, educational status, gender, beliefs, and values that underpins the existence of differential relationship and treatment between the two.

Despite few girls enjoy a good relationship with their employers, it is implicated that majority are deprived of school though they have had aspiration to continue their education after moving to Addis Ababa from different rural parts of the country. This concord with the study asserting that common complaint of child domestic workers in Zimbabwe is that they are not able to continue their schooling (M.F.C. Bourdillon, 2006, pp. 60–1). Rural children terminate their education and join domestic work to support their living which Sommerfelt (2003, p. 28) describes such work as an alternative to school. Some children have reported that “they are attending evening classes with risky timetable exposing them to harassment on return from the school”. They have further stated that “they do not have enough time to study at home and hence incompetent in the class”. Consistently, workers in Zimbabwe complained that they were not allowed enough time for schoolwork (M.F.C. Bourdillon, 2006, pp. 60–1). Thus, majority girls have claimed for the improvement of GD working conditions through the establishment of protective system supported by legislative framework with strict enforcement of government body. Some girls are interested in getting rid of domestic services and starting their own businesses if they get support from government or NGOs which is consistent with the study in Zimbabwe asserting less than half of the children wanted to stop working as DW (M.F.C. Bourdillon, 2006, pp. 57–8).

3. Conclusions and recommendations
The study found that girl domestic work is one of the exploitative child-works often downplayed due to the absence of a protective system in Ethiopia. The study pinpoints desperate family’s poverty, parental death, peer pressure and traffickers lobbying as a driving factor behind the migration of rural girls to urban areas for domestic work. It is uncovered that GDWs are exhibiting distorted perception of domestic servitude and punitive approach from their employers which has a far-reaching psycho-social impact on the girl. Above all, GDWs are undergoing exploitative working conditions with little or no investment on their prospect.

Although poverty is identified as a common factor for children exodus to urban areas for domestic services, the study implies interplay of poverty, vulnerabilities and rural communities distorted perception towards girls that propel girls to undergo abusive working conditions in the city which necessitates integrated response action supported by comprehensive policy frameworks. Employers conflate age, gender, class, educational status of GDWs to downplay their efforts and morals. Migration to urban areas is a risk factor for girls which appears as a ground for their humiliation by employers.

Domestic service represents one of the most difficult to curb (Cortés Toro, 2007) since it is perpetrated in the private home and victims are overwhelmingly girls who are dependent on their
victimizers due to the underpinning illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and other vulnerability factors. Child domestic work is found supportive in relieving children and their families from poverty no matter how, working conditions are exploitative and their relationship with employers is also humiliating. It is demonstrated that banning DW imprison girls and their families under prolonged impoverishment and is found viable to look into reformatory approaches.

Addressing agonies of GDW involves tackling multilayered problems and integrated multi-sectorial networks. Government should emphasise and work on how to ameliorate abusive working condition through legislations and establishment of formal agency dedicated for the same. It is reviewed that Ethiopian law is blind about the process of recruiting children, bylaws governing contractual agreement between children and employers, rights and responsibilities of parties involved in the agreement which Klocker (2011) describes as order failed to provide guidance on the process of hiring and firing. The study establishes relevance of strong policy and legislative framework that grants GDWs with care, affection, sympathy thereby also maintaining the right to pursue their education, entertainment, and engage in light work that is not detrimental to their physical and psychological development. Their relationship must center mutual respect, harmless approach of advice and guidance from their employers. GDW should serve with child safeguarding principles in place, with predefined schedule and tasks, and commensurate remuneration for their efforts.

Consistent with the idea of Klocker (2011), the researcher argues for the establishment of legal agency (e.g., commission for child domestic workers) with the sanity that girls would be provided with the capacity building trainings around domestic chore by the agency and oriented with their rights to help them report at the time of abuses as a precondition to employment. Legal agency would also safeguard children from being trafficked by illegal agents in between. Furthermore, the researcher shares Klocker’s view that suggest for the formal registration of CDWs and their employers, documentation of contractual agreement signed at agency and its regular oversight by local leaders. This experience is implemented and found safe for trans-boundary recruitment of Ethiopian youths to the Middle East countries. Ethiopian’s Overseas Employment (Amendment) Proclamation No. 1246–2021 article 13 sub article 3 states, “an agency who managed to get job opportunity for skilled manpower, the government shall give permission to undertake an agreement to do so with receiving country’s company upon ascertainment of the right and safety of the employees shall be respected” (Negarit Gazette, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1246/2021.)

Researcher asserts that it is imperative to aware wider people through media, trainings, child right activism and other means to improve employer’s behavior so that they would not be aggressive and punitive to their child servants. Arranging faith-based programs and advocacy program is pertinent to change distorted perception of employers towards GDW. Taking legal action on employers exploiting GDW is the other resort on those failed to take deterrence. Although NGOs have specifically targeted vulnerable child domestic workers, and employers of child domestic workers in countries like Bangladesh (Jensen, 2013), this has been minnow in Ethiopia (Freedom fund, 2021) as NGOs are out of the city to outreach rural children in a more precarious situation. Hence, NGOs are recommended to target GDW having protection concerns through direct services or referral links.

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