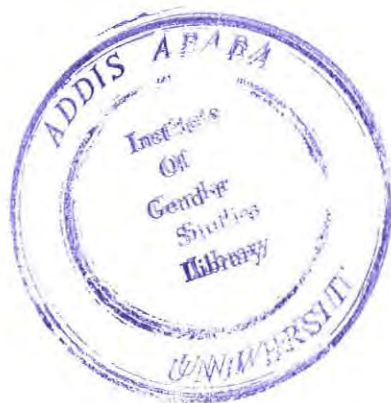


**Addis Ababa University  
School of Graduate Studies  
Institute of Gender Studies**

**Psychosocial and Economic Experiences of Gulf States  
Returnee Ethiopian Women Domestic Workers**

**By**

**Meskerem Mulatu**



**March 2011  
Addis Ababa**

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GENDER STUDIES  
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Psychosocial and Economic Experiences of Gulf States Returnee Ethiopian  
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# **Psychosocial and Economic Experiences of Gulf States Returnee Ethiopian Women Domestic Workers**

**By  
Mekserem Mulatu**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Institute of Gender Studies in Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Gender studies**



**March 2011  
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## Abstract

*In the contemporary Ethiopia, a considerable number of women are working as domestic workers in the Gulf States. Generally, the working environment in the country of destination is not favourable. However, the domestic workers are forced to work under harsh condition to principally to fulfill the economic demands of their parents as well as themselves. They fail to accomplish their objective due to different forms of abuse that they face in the country of destination. In due courses, as a result of traumatic experiences, quite a number of Ethiopian domestic workers experience psychosocial problems.*

*The main purposes of this study are to explore the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian women domestic workers. It also attempts to investigate the push and pull factors as well as the discrepancies between the expectation of the domestic workers and the reality that they face in the country of destination.*

*Methodologically, this study is qualitative method, among the five qualitative method approaches, narrative approach is employed. A primary and secondary data are used to operationalise the study. Primary data has been collected through in-depth interview with the informants and key informants of the study. As a secondary data archival records are used.*

*The findings of this research show that: 1) Traumatic and life threatening experiences of Ethiopian women domestic workers in the country of destination are the root causes for the psychosocial problems of the Ethiopian domestic workers. 2) Mostly, employers denied salaries of the domestic workers; as a result the domestic workers have not benefitted out of their employment. 3) Economic demands are the basic pushing factors whereas; modernized way of life is the major pulling factor. 4) The expectations of the domestic workers before their departure from the country of origin and the realities that they face in the country of destination are quite different. Besides, language and cultural barriers inflicted their interaction with their employers. As a result, most of the domestic workers experience culture shock, maladjustment, frustration, and finally they became depressed.*

*This study recommends, education is the key factor that could enable women to participate in the formal sector. Therefore, pledging education is the basic measure that should be taken to ensure women's participation in the public sphere. Besides, provision of prior orientation and societal awareness concerning the cultural, social and economic condition of the country of destination is very essential. Moreover, foreign employment policy is vital to monitor the activities of illegal traffickers as well as to guarantee citizen's right in the country of destination. Accordingly, providing small scale industry training and skill development training for unemployed women might scale down the number of migrant domestic workers. On the other hand language and skill training for migrant domestic workers will enable them to interact with their employers smoothly.*



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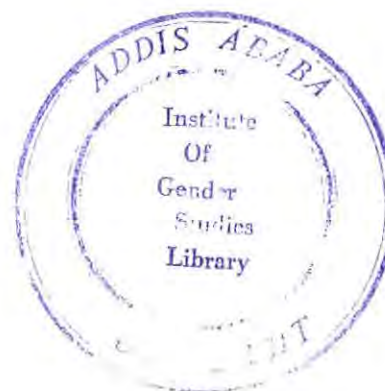
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## Abbreviations, Acronyms and Terms Definition

ASMH	Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital
AU	Africa Union
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
Dinar	The official Currency of Kuwait
Dirham	The official currency of United Arab Emirates
EOTC/ D ICAC	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Development, and Inter Church Aid Commission
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GDI	Gender Development Index
GET	Global Employment Trends
GPA	Gebeyanu Promotion and Advertisement
GSRWDW	Gulf States Returnee Women Domestic Worker
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit(German Technical Cooperation)
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency virus/Acquire Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs



MoLSA	Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSSREA	Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
U.A.E	United Arab Emirates
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
USD	United States Dollar

## **Map and Figure**

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Map of Persian Gulf



## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Migration refers most generally to patterns of movements from one place to another. There are several important concepts in migration study. A migration is a bounded geographical area within which there is considerable migratory movement. Emigration and Immigration are forms of migration defined by push and pull factors in their countries of origin and destination. Such factors can be economic, political, cultural or environmental. (Calhoun, 2002). Migration is becoming one of the global phenomena in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Specifically people in the developing countries like Ethiopia migrate due to several economic, political and social reasons.

According to the ILO (2009) Global Employment Trends report (GET), there is a dramatic increase in the number of people joining the ranks of the unemployed, working poor and those in vulnerable employment. Depending on the timeliness and effectiveness of recovery efforts, the GET envisaged an increase in global unemployment in 2009 compared to 2007 by a range of 18 million to 30 million workers, and more than 50 million if the situation continued to deteriorate.

Being a global experience migration has its own impact on society and it is directly related to the trend of globalization. Leyons (2006) points out that globalization is a two-edged sword. While it has created unprecedented economic opportunities, it has also intensified social inequalities within and across national borders. The unskilled migrant worker population is one such group that has been especially vulnerable to abuses and exploitation because of the absence of both national and international laws to protect them. Female migrant

workers, in particular, tend to suffer the most as global demand for female domestic workers continues to grow.

Countries of Gulf States incorporate Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates. ([www.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country\\_profiles/default.stm](http://www.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm)). According to Metz (1993) the gulf has been an important waterway since ancient times, bringing the people who live on its shores into early contact with other civilizations. The people are mostly Arabs and, with the exception of Oman and Bahrain, are mostly Sunni Muslims.

Among the Gulf State countries, Saudi Arabia is the world's dominant oil producer and owner of the largest hydrocarbon reserves. Saudi Arabia is one of the main players in the Arab and Muslim worlds; its stature is built on its geographic size, its prestige as the custodian of the birthplace of Islam and status as major oil producer. Additionally, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar & UAE generally enjoy a high standard of living because of oil wealth. The UAE is a regional trading and tourism hub.

Ethiopian women domestic workers migrate to Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates for economic purposes. A report by GTZ (2006) documented that from the Horn of Africa a number of domestic workers migrate to the Middle East and Gulf countries is growing. Evidence suggested that many women migrating for employment as domestic workers ended up being trafficked into forced labour and trapped in a complex net of exploitation that is facing legal, social, financial and cultural obstacles.

A study by Lalem (2004) states that the socio-cultural realities of the middle eastern countries with which the migrant women contend with are male dominated societies and countries. They give premium to the role of the males as providers. This asserts that the



countries of destination of the domestic workers are patriarchal and male dominated society.

Due to the nature of the work they undertake, migrant domestic workers can be particularly vulnerable when employed abroad. A considerable number of countries ratified various international conventions like the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>1</sup>. Article 11 of CEDAW calling for elimination of discrimination against women in employment specifically it mentions “the right to social security”. Besides, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)’s article 4 as non-derogable including the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin (Forsythe, 2009).

Whereas, according to Forsythe (2009) the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) calls up on the economic, social and cultural rights that refers to a range of affirmative obligations of a state to its own people from the assuance of basic needs such as food, shelter, and health care to access to education and decent jobs. Additionally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) article 2 and 7 states that all human being rights are to be enjoyed without discrimination on the basis of sex (Forsythe, 2009). On top of this, the FDRE constitution guarantees human rights of all citizens<sup>2</sup>. However, these national and international legal instruments couldn’t guarantee the human rights of the domestic workers as a result of several factors because of the private nature of domestic work. I.e. The domestic workers are living under the close control of their employers for twenty four hours a day.

As a result of male dominant value system and the persistent nature of patriarchy, large number of women face discrimination are the victim of gender based violence. According to the definition by Walby (1990:20) as cited in Essed et al (2005) patriarchy is the system of

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<sup>1</sup> Bahrain, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, & UAE ratified CEDAW.

<sup>2</sup> FDRE Constitution 1995, Article 14, Article 18

social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. To disburse the perpetuated system of patriarchy the fundamental principle of CEDAW affirms human rights and equality for women around the world. Though, the major objective of CEDAW 1979 is to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises, women who are involved in different sectors are still experiencing discriminatory acts (Forsythe, 2009).

Generally, women as a whole, and specifically, Ethiopian women domestic workers, are facing discrimination because of their socially constructed roles that are assigned to them based on their biological sex. As a result, social, economic, political, cultural and religious factors intersect and marginalize these women in diverse dimensions. In addition, the feminization natures of poverty exceptionally affect women in different aspects. These are assigned to be the main pushing factors that force Ethiopian women to migrate to the Gulf States in search of employment. Besides, in order to be economically self-reliant and to fulfil the needs of their extended families, quite a number of Ethiopian women migrate to the Middle East and Gulf States. This option is the coping strategies that many of Ethiopian women currently adopt to earn their own income and lead their life.

Absolute poverty, lack of formal education, consequences of harmful traditional practices like early marriage, societal discrimination against women, widowhood, divorce, separation or abandonment and unemployment are factors, among others, which leave women economically weak. As a result, women could be vulnerable to further problems that force them to migrate (legally or illegally) in search of wage labour where they must accept any substandard employment in order to survive.

However, there are also pulling factors, such as better wage, slight improvement seen in the lives of friends or relatives who migrated to the Gulf States as a domestic worker, technological advancement and modern way of life in the country of destination, as well as the trends of globalization, attract Ethiopian women migrants.

As stated by Regt (2007), in the past ten years, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States have become common destinations for Ethiopian women in search of a better future. International Labour Organization (2004) report on women domestic workers reveals that most domestic workers remain excluded from the coverage of labour legislation in most Arab League States since their work is in residences (hence not considered as workplaces) of private/ individual persons (thus not considered employers) that are difficult to supervise by labour inspectors. Consequently, migrant domestic workers are not considered employees and their work is unprotected.

According to Pearson (2003), women trafficked to the Gulf States for domestic labours go via legal or illegal employment agencies. With illegal agencies, often women are introduced to agents through family members or friends, they usually pay some of the agent's fee in advance, and the balance is deducted from their pay once they have began work.

Accordingly, women who migrate from Ethiopia use both the legal and illegal ways to enter into the Gulf States. Legal way of migration is regularly processed by agents located within Ethiopia that has branch offices in the country of destination. Women who would like to process their employment through legal way need to be registered in Ethiopia, the copy of their employment contract shall also be documented at MoLSA. Whenever they are in need of help, they can contact the MoLSA office either by telephone or through their relatives. Thereafter, the MoLSA shall contact the agent in line with the employment contract.

Whereas, illegal migration is facilitated by individual brokers or business people who are making money out of the employment of the domestic workers. Once they have got the commission for their service (i.e. mediation between the employee and employer) most of the time they withdraw themselves out of the issue or change their address.

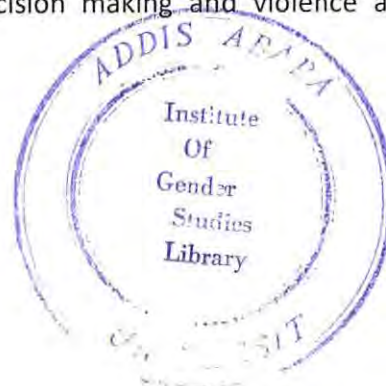
As a result, various difficulties and even life threatening experiences and discrimination that are faced by the Ethiopian women migrant domestic workers in the Gulf States have not yet been given due attention. And it is possible to say that their experience in this regard is one of the crises of the present generation that is engendered out of absolute poverty. Besides, insignificant number of scientific research has been done though the issue knocks the doors of each societal group. Specifically, based on the knowledge of the present researcher, the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian women domestic workers have not been studied deeply.

Therefore, this research attempts to explore the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian women domestic workers.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

A study by UNFPA (2008) shows that in Ethiopia women account for less than half (43%) of the total employees in the country. Considering the percentage of female employees vis-a-vis the total number of employees by employment type, the highest is in domestic activities (78%) followed by unpaid activities (59.3%). In other types of formal employment (e.g. government, NGOs, private organizations), the percentage of female workers is less than 35. A report by UNDP (2009) indicates that Ethiopia's GDI (Gender Development Index) value is 0.403, which is 97.3 percent of its Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI does not account for gender inequality, and the GDI adds this component to the HDI. Ethiopia ranks 133 in the world for its GDI. This is illustrated by such indicators as literacy: 50 percent of adult males are literate compared to 22.8 percent of adult females.

For instance Almaz (1991), Hirut (2004) confirms that lack of access to productive resources, such as land; lack of access to education, employment opportunities, basic health services, and protection of basic human rights; low decision making and violence and harmful

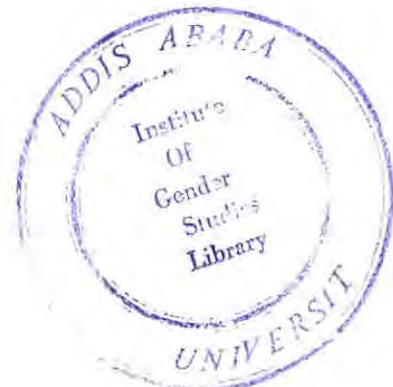


traditional practices are some of the indicators of the socioeconomic marginalization of women in Ethiopia.

By the same token, a study by Schrover *et al.* (2007) shows that migration affects women and men differently and migrant women are restricted in their migration differently than their male counterparts. Differences between migrant men and women can be explained by differences in (perceived) vulnerability of (potential) migrant women and men. The feminization of labour migration to the Middle East is first and foremost owing to the large influx of migrant domestic workers from Asia and Africa.

According to the Labour Market Information Bulletin (2010) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in the year 2008/2009 alone, 21, 256 Ethiopians migrated to Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, U.A.E, and other Gulf State countries. Out of these migrants about 81.7% are female and 18.3% male. The majority of the female migrants belong to the age group of 15 - 34. It is also mentioned that starting from the year 2000, the number of Ethiopians who get employed via private employment agencies has been increasing.

In addition, MoFA and MoLSA (2010) indicate that the pushing factor for 73.3% and 26.7% of women migrants was unemployment and low income of their family respectively. These women who are legally or illegally trafficked to the Gulf States are working as domestic workers. They face exploitation and unfavourable treatment due to lack of proper and relevant information. ILO (2004) observes that the average working hours per week recorded by domestic workers in the Gulf States is very high by international standards. The majority of domestic helpers works for more than 11 hours a day and are on-call 24 hours a day. Furthermore, most of the domestic workers reported that on a given day they begin work at 5am and are not allowed to go to sleep until 11.30pm.



Furthermore, Regt (2007) reveals that restriction of freedom of movement is one of the forms of domination and control experienced by foreign domestic workers in Lebanon. The employers also infringe on their civil liberty by withholding the passports and other identity papers and even more, women domestic workers experience total isolation including denial of access to telephone and communications.

Power relation between the domestic workers who are seen as foreigner as well as an inferior group and the employers is visible. All domestic workers from other countries in general and from Ethiopia in particular are maltreated, humiliated and abused verbally, sexually and physically (ILO, 2004). Once the domestic worker enters into the household, although she is considered part of the "harem"<sup>3</sup>, she is not considered as female member of the household, but rather assigned a lower social status. Her role is to relieve the house wife by handling all chores in the domestic sphere.

Furthermore, as Pearson (2003) notes, due to lack of alternatives, more often women who escape abusive situations of domestic labour end up in prostitution. The illegal means of escaping sexual and physical abuse, insecure working environment in general and the overall oppressive situation diminish their hope of overcoming poverty. The same study also confirmed that in many cases, trafficked women are forced to work 18 hours a day, have no rest day, are underpaid or not paid at all, are raped, beaten, threatened and locked in the house. Such treatment devalues human rights of the domestic workers and it mentally tortures all the hopes that they had had when they left their motherland. In addition, their ambition to resolve the economic constraint of their family as well as of themselves might not be achieved. This results in maladjustment, stress and other forms of traumas.

As a result, emotional torture and trauma is now common among domestic workers in the Gulf States so that some of them even commit suicide. The reports of different global media

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<sup>3</sup> Unblessed or cursed individual.



on suicide committed by domestic workers in the Gulf States are one source of information about the increasing extent of the problem under consideration. Ethiopian domestic workers are also among the victims of such incidents.<sup>4</sup> Thousands of young Ethiopian women are being enticed via Djibouti, Egypt and Somalia for domestic work, to the Middle East particularly to the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon with the promises of lucrative work but except few lucky ones, most of them suffer worst verbal, physical and sexual abuses.

Most girls are employed in back-breaking jobs for up to 18 hours a day. Many Ethiopians have ended up killed by their employees, or commit suicide and many more return home mentally ill, partially paralyzed, insane, with broken backs and legs and others been burned with acid. However, the experiences and the challenges of Ethiopian domestic works are not well documented and the issue has not yet received the attention it deserves.<sup>5</sup>

A study conducted by Birke *et al.* (2009) on returnees from the Middle East to Ethiopia was investigated due to the observations of the increasing number of returnee migrant domestic workers seeking professional psychiatric help. The authors point out that this is just the tip of the iceberg of mental disorders experienced by female migrants, and that it is an area of concern.

Ethiopian women employed as domestic workers in the Gulf States are described as being exposed to sub-standard working conditions, physical and sexual abuses. (Birke *et al.*, 2009) Returnee women have recounted having their passports taken away from them so they could not leave, being expected to work 24 hours a day, and not being able to have contact with other Ethiopians. According to this study these conditions lead to, “social defeat” of the migrant women.

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<sup>4</sup> VOA, Tuesday, July 27, 2010

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article31851>

As stated in the Background part, due to different reasons quite a number of Ethiopian women migrate legally or illegally to the Gulf States. Even though, there are very few studies that have touched this topic, this study however, attempts to explore the root causes for Ethiopian women's migration and the psychosocial and economic experiences they encounter after they have migrated to the Gulf States. This study intends to document and draw lessons from their actual life as second-class citizens and as a domestic worker. The actual experience and situational knowledge, including the socio-economic and multifaceted life style, of the Ethiopian domestic workers shall be assessed and documented by giving them the chance to share their experience. They also will have a possibility in which their voice can be heard by both the government as well as the society.

What is more, listening to their voice (stories, grievances, what they have to say) and identifying their plights could help to create societal awareness as well as to call for a government intervention aimed at minimizing the degree of illegal migration and human trafficking in Ethiopia.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This study attempts to address the following five principal questions:

1. What were the major push and pull factors that forced the women to migrate to the Gulf States?
2. What were the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian women?
3. What were their difficulties as women and as domestic workers?
4. How do women domestic workers attempt to overcome these difficulties?
5. Were there discrepancies between their expectations before they had migrated and the realities they faced in the Gulf States?

#### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to explore the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian women domestic workers. More specifically, the study attempts to:

- identify the push factors that force the domestic workers to migrate to the Gulf States either legally or illegally;
- map out pull factors that attracted the domestic workers to migrate to the Gulf States either legally or illegally;
- look into the difficulties they face not only as domestic workers, but also as women;
- identify coping strategies they adopt to overcome the challenging situations, and
- assess whether there are contradiction or matches between their expectations before they migrate and the realities they face in the Gulf States.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The migration of domestic workers is becoming a critical social, economic, political and gender issue. More specifically, the gendered aspect of migration in relation to psychosocial and economic experiences of the migrant shall be the underscored lesson for the society. In addition, the study shall build societal awareness. Parents as well as migrant women will have sufficient knowledge or awareness of the situation in the destination country before their departure. The study also contributes to the scientific literature in the areas of migration and gender. Moreover, based on the findings and recommendations of this research, the concerned governmental, nongovernmental organizations as well as the society at large could be able to give the due emphasis to the issue and take appropriate measures.

### **1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

This research mainly concentrates on Gulf States returnee Ethiopian women domestic workers who experienced psychological problems and treated at Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital. The age group of the target of the research is from 18 – 35 years old. It aims to share psycho-social, cultural, and economic experiences of women domestic workers by reciting direct words of the target group.

### **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

It is obvious that narrative research needs ample time and effort in order to grasp distinct knowledge from individuals who traversed different living situations. However, due to time constraint this research is limited to come across lived experiences of five individuals who faced psychosocial difficulties as a result of their traumatic experience. In addition, a very limited number of reference books on the issues of gender and migration in the case of Ethiopia as well as on the areas psychosocial problem that are related to migration contributed to the narrowness of the literature part of the study. Due to different cultural, social and habitual ways of expression as well as linguistic use meanings and thoughts in Amharic and English language the issue of backward and forward translation might be one of the limitation.

### **1.8 Organization of the Thesis**

Including this introductory chapter, this thesis is organized in five chapters. The second chapter deals with the theoretical framework of the thesis and review of related literatures. The third chapter describes the method, approach and all methodological aspects that are employed to conduct this study. The fourth chapter incorporates the narrations, findings and discussion of the study. This chapter has two sections, the first section deals with the narrations and the second section is findings and discussion. The last chapter, that is the conclusion and recommendation part, which summarizes the findings of the study and proposes recommendations.

## Chapter Two

### Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

One of the foremost objectives of feminist research is to uncover women's marginalization and subordination. This study thus privileges the voices and experiences of women who have migrated to the Gulf States. Feminist epistemology's central concern is how gender influences what we conceptualize as knowledge. Western societies' rationalization and thought as well as traditional researches are embedded in 'masculine' institutions and values that generate correspondingly 'masculine' knowledge. Women largely fall outside the realm of this knowledge are disqualified from either acquiring or producing it. Naturalized empiricist epistemology offers excellent prospects for advancing a feminist epistemology of theoretical knowledge. (Cudd and Andreasen, 2005).

A broad segment of feminist writers and social commentators argue that feminist theory affords room to several intellectual and practical worldviews. Furthermore, it complements other critical approaches to social analyses by exposing women's subordination as well as revealing the moral and political implications of that subordination. Feminist theory thus provides a suitable lens through which ideas and social practices can be analyzed while simultaneously offering a vision of liberation; an ideal of what life, persons, and society would be like without the subordination of women (Cudd and Andreasen, 2005).

In making sense of the data collected for this study from a nuanced vantage point this study will employ three strands of feminist theorizing, that is, standpoint feminist theory, intersectionalist feminist theory and third world feminism. These three feminist theoretical strands offer a dynamic analytical frame through which this study can capture the aspects that undergird the relationship between gender and migration as well as how migration is gendered. In this study the lived experiences of the researched are the ground and centre



where the knowledge generation as well as construction will derive from. Reinharz and Davidman (1992) posit that;

*Feminist standpoint epistemology is a unique philosophy of knowledge building that challenges us to (1) see and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of oppressed women and (2) apply the vision and knowledge of oppressed women to social activism and social change. Feminist standpoint epistemology requires the fusion of knowledge and practice. It is both a theory of knowledge building and a method of doing research—an approach to knowledge construction and a call to political action. But how do we actually go about integrating a feminist standpoint. Feminist standpoint epistemology requires us to place women at the center of the research process: Women’s concrete experiences provide the starting point from which to build knowledge (Reinharz and Davidman, 1992: 65).*

Any power relations – of class, race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, as well as gender – give a diversity of ‘standpoint’ or vantage points for both the oppressors and the oppressed. From the ‘standpoint’ of oppressed lives, that are the centre of oppression, it is possible to make meanings. There is thus an urgent need not only to capture the perceptions of the ‘excluded women’ but also their experiences. The fact that a feminist standpoint is a way of understanding the world, a point of view of social reality that begins with, and is developed directly from, women’s experiences (Reinharz and Davidman, 1992)

Without giving prominence to the lived stand point of women it becomes a tangential effort to tell or write about the experiences of women. The neglect of women’s standpoint in understanding their experiences can only generate unreliable and misleading knowledge. The segregation that they face as a result of their class, race and secondary citizenship status should be exhaustively elaborated with their own voices and expression and stance being the kingpin of such analyses.

Women may face oppression stemming from gendered power relations that may characterize the interface between them and their employers. As such the situational knowledge of these women is of great value in revealing their overall experience as domestic workers. Cudd and Andreasen (2005) also affirm that the ground for knowledge

should be the experience of the researched. They note that the “starting of the thought” should commence from marginalized people as follows:

*Starting off research from women’s life will generate less partial and distorted account not only of women’s lives but also of men’s lives and of the whole social order. Women’s lives and experiences provide the “ground” for these knowledge, though these clearly do not provide foundations for knowledge in the conventional philosophical sense. These grounds are the site, the activities, from which scientific questions arise (Cudd and Andreasen, 2005:222).*

Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins in McCaun and Kim (2003) argues that subordinated groups not only see the world from their location, which the dominant culture ignores, but they also have to know the dominant culture in order to survive in it. She sees oppression as a “matrix of domination” consisting of an interlocking web of oppression that works simultaneously in the same social structure.

Though feminist standpoint theory critically considers the situational knowledge and stance of Ethiopian women domestic workers, the racial, class and gender aspects of the migrant has a considerable impact on their experience. Therefore, to explore the lived experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian women domestic workers intersectionalist feminist theory has also applied.

The central concept of intersectionalist feminist theory is that a multiple range of identities such as economic status (class), gender, race, among other identities intersect to marginalize and oppress women. Crenshaw (1994) emphasizes that race, gender, and other identity categories are most often constitute vestiges of bias and domination. They are reflective of intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power is ingrains exclusion or marginalization of those who are different. For example when we see women who are employed as domestic workers, their class, race and gender has a profound impact on their daily existence

and positivist appeals to experience. She recognizes the salience of stories of 'women's' in shaping experiences.

Therefore, the unique experience of women in the third world should be seen on the contextual uniqueness that informs where third world women are located such as the economic, social and cultural perspectives of the third world.

Uma Narayan in McCaan and Kim (2003) argues that:

*It would be a mistake to move from the thesis that knowledge is constructed by human subjects who are socially constituted to the conclusion that those who are differently located socially can never attain some understanding of our experience or some sympathy with our cause. In that case, we would be committed to not just a perspectival view of knowledge but a relativistic one. Relativism implies that a person could have knowledge of only the sorts of things she had experienced personally and that she would be totally unable to communicate any of the contents of her knowledge to someone who didn't have the same sorts of experiences (McCaan and Kim, 2003: 313).*

Accordingly, diversity is not a foreclosure to reflexivity and empathetic interrogation of people in the midst of the research problem. However it is important that situational knowledge generation sticks to the real experiences of women and their voice should be heard directly from them. Presently, in western countries the situation of female migrants remains largely subordinated to broader themes that views all migrants as a homogenous groups without coming to the level of 'women' experience the different contexts different not just because they are migrants but because they are also importantly women.

In light of the pervasiveness of migration in the third world it is important that nuanced understandings are generated, particularly in the case of women. All migrants should be given chances to tell their stories on the basis of their perspectives and experiences. A study by Falola and Afolabi (2007) argues that understanding African women's realities is useful analytical device for moving away from identifying African women as abstract entities and to

pay attention instead of individual women's experiences, based on local or regional cultural epistemologies.

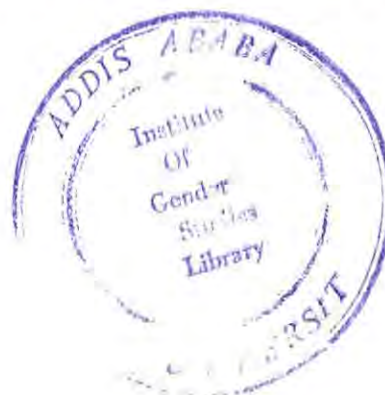
Moreover, Mothany, *et al.* (1991) engages women's life stories, testimonials, and personal essays. She reads these as creative responses to the tensions and contradictions of lived experience, when this experience is conditioned by local cultural practices, along with globally organized political and economic relations. The central theme of third world feminism is;

*Western Feminism that was advocated by white middle class women (Liberal/Radical) can't define a coherent interest group of "third world women" though the nation of feminism is universal 'sisterhood'. The life style and experience of third world women is completely different from western women. The experiences, histories and self-reflections of feminists of colour and third-world feminists remain at a center of anthology (Mohanty et al., 1991: 52).*

Therefore, third world feminism defines third world women in terms of their problem or achievement as well as their life experiences. The major distinction of third world feminism from western feminism is that women in the third world countries address issues as they configured and related to their lives and immediate surroundings such as clean water to drink, food to eat and facilities of appropriate health care centres (Mohanty *et al.*, 1991: 52).

As illustrated by Mohanty *et al.*, third world women's experiences should be understood from their own perspectives.

The living conditions, socio-cultural, religious values, as well as other variables that shape social stratification of the western and third world women are radically different. For example in the third world women are the social group that is most severely affected by acute poverty because of the lack of equal educational opportunities and denial of privileges that are enjoyed by men.. This is directly related to the push-pull factors characterizing migration. The pull-push factors that saw women migrating to the Gulf States has to be



situated in the total background of women's experiences including their experiences of their previous contexts.

Third world feminism thus embraces as argued by Chandra Mohanty it is an imagined view of third world women by the western feminist cannot actually represent the unique features, experiences, cultural values as well as living conditions of third world women. (Mohanty *et al.*,1991)Rather the story of third world women can only be genuinely told through their experiences and unique situation in their contexts.

## **2. 2 Review of Related Literature**

In this section, definition of terms the general overview of migration and concepts related to migration as well as relevant literature of the experiences of domestic workers in the Gulf States will be elaborated. A variety of literature that was presented on the specific topic is evaluated in order to substantiate the subject matter.

### **2.2.1 Definition of Key Terms**

**Acculturation:** the adoption of new cultural patterns following contact between groups often used synonymously with or as a more voluntarist substitute for assimilation. Acculturation is frequently invoked in the context of immigration, where the cultural and linguistic practices of the dominant culture exercise a powerful normative influence upon newcomers ( Smelser and Baltes, 2001).

**Anxiety Disorders:** represents one of the five basic emotional states and can be defined by effective (basic emotional feelings), perceptive (realization of bodily or psycho motor sensations) and cognitive components. Besides, these subjective components, behavioural and psychological characteristics can be used to define anxiety phenomenologically ( Smelser and Baltes, 2001).

**Depression:** covers a wide range of emotional states that range in severity from transient moods of sadness to major psychotic episodes accompanied by increased risk of suicide. Depression in the form of a brief sad mood is a universal experience, it is a normal part of living that accompanies the losses, frustrations, failures and disappointments that all of us face ( Smelser and Baltes, 2001).

**Emigration and Immigration:** are forms of migration defined by push and pull factors in their countries of origin and destination. Such factors can be economic, political, cultural or environmental in nature (Calhoun, 2002)

**Gulf States:** Countries of Gulf States incorporate Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates (<http://www.britannica.com/bps/dictionary>).

**Migration:** refers most generally patterns of movements from one place to another. There are several important concepts in migration study. A migration region is a bounded geographical area within which there are considerable migratory movements. (Calhoun, 2002)

**Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** to a constellation of symptoms which cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning. The word trauma means an injury stemming from penetration of body defence (intactness) such as skin ( Smelser and Baltes, 2001).

**Psychosocial:** involving both psychological and social aspects or **relating** social conditions to mental health (<http://www.britannica.com/bps/dictionary>).

**Stress:** a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation (<http://www.britannica.com/bps/dictionary>).

### **2.2.2 Background of Migration**

As migration is a global trend in the lives of both women and men, different scholars developed a range of theories that are interrelated. Ernest Ravenstein is widely regarded as the earliest migration theorist. Ernest Ravenstein in Massey (1993) used census data from England and Wales to develop his "Laws of Migration" (1889) and concludes that migration was governed by a "push-pull" process; that is, unfavourable conditions in one place (oppressive laws, heavy taxation, etc.) "push" people out, and favourable conditions in an external location "pull" them out. The primary causes of migration are better external economic opportunities.

Based on these laws of migration, the common ground behind people's movement is unfavourable condition in the country of origin and attractive situations in the countries of destination. The primary cause for migration is better external economic opportunities and the volume of migration decreases as distance increases. Migration also occurs in stages instead of one long move, thus population movements are bilateral (Massey,1993).

Also important is the fact that differentials like gender, social class, age influence a person's mobility. Several theories have been developed to understand international patterns of migration on their own terms but these are largely within the push-pull theory and such constitute variants of the perspective. Lee (1966) developed the push-pull factors of migration in 1966, and discusses the number of factors that influence the potential migrants which may arise in the places of origin the recipient area, the traversed space or any combination thereof. The conditions that initiate the potential migrants in the country of origin are called push factors and situations that attract or reinforce the potential migrants in the hosting country are called pull factors.

### **2.2.3 The Determinants (Push and Pull) factors of Women's Migration**

Migration is always linked to the push and pull factors of a certain societal structure or living conditions. Boyle *et al.* (1998) describes the push and pull factors that influence migration as follows;

*So-called 'push' and 'pull' factors have a long pedigree within migration research. The original formulation envisaged a combination of push factors from the origin and pull factors from the destination bringing about any one migration. Some of the pushing factors are; - decline in national resources or the prices it commands, decreased demand for a particular product or service, loss of employment due to incompetence, discriminatory treatment on the ground of politics, religion or ethnic, cultural alienation from community and poor marriage or employment opportunities. Some of the pulling factors are; improved employment opportunities, superior income-earning opportunities, opportunities for specialized training or education and preferable environment or general living condition. (Boyle et al., 1998:67)*

Extensive reviews of literature in UNDP (2005) reveal that all major studies on migration share the view that economic disparities between developing and developed countries continue to be a key determinant of cross-border movements for poor countries. As a developing country the actual experiences of Ethiopians rely on the same demarcations. A report by UNECA (2009) stresses that lack of access to resources, poverty and gender discrimination as well as civil unrest and war render women and girls particularly vulnerable to internal and cross-border trafficking.

Accordingly, Sassen (2003) states that the increase in the numbers of women immigration can be explained in several ways. Among these the trans-globalization of economies, which has created a labour demand in low paying service sectors of developed economies is a central theme. Such literature illustrates how the global labour market is also an arena for gender disparity. It is also evidence that women's involvement in the public sphere, however their involvement, is bound by low wages that are not attractive for men. In addition, the socioeconomic status of women in the sending countries could be the major pushing factor shaping resultant migration.

The practical living conditions of African women are dominated by a culture that is male centered and favours men at the expense of needs. Falola and Afolabi (2007) describe how culture and socially constructed practices oppress African women and force them to look to the outside world for a better life;

*African women undergo various social and cultural problems in their home countries, including andocentric cultural practices which make women unequal to men; unequal access to education, employment, and social benefits; illiteracy or inadequate education, harmful traditional stereotypes that depict women as property, commodities, servants and sexual objects; criminal justice systems that ignore and even perpetuate violence and discrimination against women, religious doctrines and practices that are lopsidedly gendered; political insecurity and crushing economic depressions. (Falola and Afolabi, 2007:167)*

On the other hand, a study by ILO (2004) shows that low-income countries dependent on a few agricultural exports such as cotton and maize have suffered from increased competition from subsidized exports of the same commodities by the more developed countries. A recent general equilibrium analysis of trade policies for low-income countries like those in sub-Saharan Africa indicates that trade liberalization by a low-income country only generates increased emigration because liberalization leads to a sharp fall in the real exchange rate. This information supplements the reality that is happening in the case of Ethiopia. Unemployment and different social, cultural and economic constraints push the women domestic workers to opt for migration.

Additionally, UNECA (2009) states that high remittances from abroad potentially conceal the inability of countries to provide profitable work to migrating citizens. Furthermore, the size of remittances may also conceal the human cost of migration. Due to this, citizens opt to migrate in order to acquire a better income and in the case of women domestic workers such kind of option is the source of their economic empowerment. In turn, they can fulfil the needs of their family as well as themselves regardless of the prevailing dynamics in the

receiving country. Furthermore, Adepoju (2004) as cited in Gebeyehu (2007) stated that Ethiopia is one of African countries that experience village to town, town to city, country to country or continent to continent migration in responses to the “pull of opportunity” and the “push of poverty”.

A study by Schlyter (2009) posits that migrant domestic workers cross borders as labour migrants to improve their economic conditions and those of their families as well as to get away from situations of abuse. As citizens of a developing country, the same could be true of Ethiopian migrant domestic workers. The socioeconomic, cultural and political structure of society that neglects and marginalizes women involvement in the development sector are the pushing factors whereas the increasing disparity of wages/incomes between the sending and receiving countries, which is one of the means for women’s economic empowerment as well as technological advancements in the country of destination and modern way of life are the major pulling factors.

Furthermore, it is notable that as the world entered a period of globalization women migration became very common global reality as it can be seen in the case of Ethiopia. Sassen (2003) concurs with this perspective and notes how globalization has also resulted in the feminization of migration. This is happening across and within different borders as the trans-nationalization of the global economy provides the dual opportunity of cheap and vulnerable labour both at home and abroad.

As Schlyter (2009) stresses that the process of economic globalization is not gender neutral – the global hierarchy of labour is also structured along gender lines. With regards to Ethiopia, as indicated by IOM (n.d) most victims of trafficking interviewed identified economic reasons as the major push factor for their migration. The purpose of their migration, in most cases, is to earn better wages so they can send remittances home to their families in Ethiopia.

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In addition to this, the patriarchal value system of society in alliance with culture and religion marginalise denigrate women and their role in society. Gender defined roles and responsibilities of women and men are the practical instruments that distinguish how women and men are situated in society. This undergirds the subordination of women subordination. As a result the socio-economic status of women is presented as insignificant compared to men. The link between women's migration, gender segregation and vulnerability is stated as follows;

*Continuity in patterns of migration is found in the fact that gender segregation appears to be determinant in both traditional and new migratory flows. However, vulnerability is associated not only with gender segregation but also with class differentiation. The existence of gendered division of labour and the development of gender-segregated and class stratified labour market at both the society of origin and of destination seems to be a key factor determining the scope and composition of female migration. (Parrenas, 2001: 58)*

In contemporary times women's involvement is becoming high in contrast to the period between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Parrenas (2001) confirms that because of the gendered labour market, women too were in demand as labourers (pull factors), albeit in smaller numbers and they often had the same incentives to move as men (push factors). Additionally, Boyle *et al.* (1998) state that:

*Much of the literature discussing return migration focuses on those who move from developing to developed countries for employment reasons. These migrants move in order to accumulate savings, often so that they can invest in property or business when they return home. However, for many, this intention to return may dwindle even though many of these individuals claim that they still intend to move home at a later stage. This failure to complete the intended migration route is referred to as the 'myth of return' (Boyle *et al.*, 1998:35)*

It is also illustrated by Parrenas (2001) that literature on female migration has focused on the reconstitution of gender within migratory processes. In particular, studies have concluded that migration, which involves the movement "from one system of gender

stratification to another” reconstitute the position of women in the labour market and household. This affirms the argument that social stratification and ways of living are gendered. Women domestic workers experience such dynamics as a result of migration.

Similarly, gender is also a determinant of migration. Parrenas (2001) emphasizes that the greater demand for low-wage female workers particularly in the receiving communities initiated the primary migration of women. Yet for the most part, women remain secondary migrants. Besides, domestic work is one of the cheapest forms of labour. Lutz (2008) argues that legislative provisions take domestic work as an inferior occupation and sides with employers in perpetuating the devaluation of domestic work and depriving domestic workers their full social rights. The revival of domestic work is attributed to the predominance of immigrant labour in the sector and in the vulnerability of workers who accept low remuneration and degrading working and living conditions.

Additionally, IOM (2010) reaffirms that the work performed by women migrants, such as care and domestic services, although essential to the economies of destination countries, is frequently under-valued and poorly integrated in admission policies.

Traditionally in patriarchal societies, men as heads of the family as well as breadwinners are the ones who primarily engaged in migration as compared to women. Single men were also encouraged to migrate while single women were tied to women’s roles which limited them to the private sphere. Parrenas (2001) states that in the past migration almost appears to have been a male dominated enterprise. Firstly single men migrated in search of independence and resources in order to establish their own families. Secondly men have greater access to family and external financial (credit) resources while the third explanation is men’s greater chance of finding a job as a migrant worker and their higher salaries which, in theory, make ‘man’s migration’ seem as the best family strategy.

However as it is reported by IOM (2010) that female migrants send approximately the same amount of money home in remittances as do male migrants. Research however suggests that women tend to send a higher proportion of their income, while men send a lower proportion of theirs. They also usually send money more regularly and for longer periods of time, mostly to other women left in charge of their children.

On the other hand, recent discussions on gender and migration have been underpinned by two dynamics; the feminization of migration and the globalization of reproductive labour or care economy (Erenreich & Hochschild, 2002). Similarly, Hindson (1987) as cited in Boyle *et al.*(1998) shows that female migration experiences are determined both by intra-household resources and decision-making structures and by the socially determined, gender-segregated labour market available to them. Therefore, we can say that the trend of women's migration is substantially linked to their role that is constructed by the society based on their biological sex. In other words the value system of the society confined women only to involve in private sphere.

### **2.2.5 The Magnitude of Women's Migration**

It is estimated that in 2010, 10.2 percent of global migrants will hail from Africa (UNDP) 2009. Fransen & Kuschminder (2009) document that only three percent of the world migrates, and around 1.9 percent of Africa's population engages in international migration. cursory inspection of research by ILO (2004) also uncovers that migration has emerged as a central issue of our time. Each year millions of men and women leave their homes and cross national borders in search of greater human security for themselves and their families. The migration of workers from developing countries to the industrialized countries in search of better income has been on the rise in the last few decades.

In line with this, the AU (n.d.) argues that the process of globalization by itself, will also facilitate the movement of people across the various regions in Africa (through regional integration), and to other regions outside the Continent as the number of migrants

continues to increase. Undoubtedly, migration will be a major topic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Apparently, this is part of the evidence to say that the trend or practice of migration is one of the major issues in the contemporary world.

The AU (n.d.) further emphasizes that throughout its history, up to the present time Africa has experienced important migratory patterns both voluntary and forced, which have contributed to its contemporary demographic landscape. In this regard, women's migration is also incorporated as one of the huge flows of mobility.

A study by Massey (1993) also stresses that with demographers claiming that globally, female migration is now virtually equal to that of males. This is because first, as a result of "the feminization of migration" and second, and perhaps more important, many migration scholars now insist that migration itself is a gendered phenomenon that requires more sophisticated theoretical and analytical tools than studies of sex roles and of sex as a dichotomous variable as was the basis of past analyses.

Women who migrated and get involved in domestic labour substantially choose this sector for the purpose of overcoming poverty and socio-economic problems in their country of origin. A study by Lutz (2008) states that in the contemporary era, migrant domestic workers may perceive domestic work as a stepping stone; but often it is perceived as a stepping stone that will see them enjoying their acquisitions back in their countries of origin. Other migrant domestic workers see themselves as permanent immigrants in the new societies, and since they may bring educational and occupational experience from their countries of origin they may be easily integrated in the receiving counties.

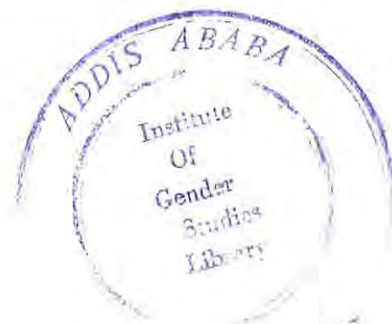
A study by Regt (2007) emphasizes that mobility is a central element in discussions on women's migration and employment as domestic workers. On the one hand, the "feminization of migration", in which women cross international borders to take up paid work as domestic worker, indicates an increased mobility of women. In relation to this, a

report of GTZ (2006) justifies the fact that the social status of women domestic workers in the Gulf States is related to the status and nature of the work, the complex gender and social status relationships, the racial issues and the fact that domestic workers are migrants, makes the situation in destination countries complicated. Substantially, the power relation between the employer and the domestic workers is visible in addition to that. The working environment of the domestic workers under such circumstances is likely to be highly unfavourable as a result of their social status among other negatively defined social identities.

It is stated in different reports of the UN's agencies that the phenomenon of women migration in developing countries is one major economic source for women. According to the ILO (2004) in Vietnam and Ethiopia, migration provides women with employment opportunities and the ability to improve their living standards at home, mostly through domestic work. A study by Goldstein *et al.* (2000) indicates that in Ethiopia, where permanent migration of women seems to be greater than that of men, women are now also migrating temporarily for work-related reasons.

### **2.2.6 An overview of Migration of Ethiopian domestic workers**

Migration as defined above is the movement of human capital. Since human capital is the major resource of a country Fransen & Kuschminder (2009) argues that it might have a negative impact on Ethiopia's development processes. As any other developing country the trend of migration in Ethiopia cannot be different. Besides, globalization also has a substantial impact on the out flow of human capital including that woman. Emebet (2002) notes that changing labour markets in line with the dictates of globalization have increased both opportunities and pressures for women to migrate. Additionally, Demoz (1998) states that emigrants received information regarding employment opportunities from informal sources, friends, relatives and local intermediaries were found to be the sole sources of information.



In addition, Fransen & Kuschminder (2009) explicitly indicates that migration in Ethiopia is and has historically been characterized by complex flows arising from a combination of root causes. These root causes have included poverty, drought, political repression, forced repatriation and forced resettlement. It is evident that extreme poverty and poor governance have been and continue to be key driving forces for Ethiopian migration. Besides, Gebeyehu (2007) also emphasises that presence of intermediaries, economic factors and influence from peer, household, families and establishment of social networks both at the destination and country of origin have contributions for their migration.

On the other hand, there are different international conventions that are related to migrant employment that have been ratified by Ethiopia. Some of the international conventions are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1996, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others of 1949, and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of 1979. According to EFDRE Constitution (1995) Article 9.4 stated that all International agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land.<sup>6</sup>

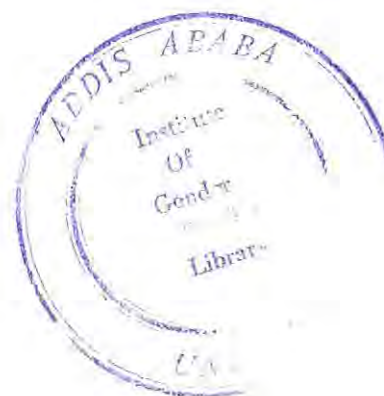
Besides, Proclamation No. 691/2010 of FDRE's definition of power and duties of the Executive organ mandate the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) to regulate the provision of foreign employment services of Ethiopians.<sup>7</sup> Article 30 (2) determines the manner in which Ethiopians are employed outside of Ethiopia and Ethiopian nationals can be employed outside Ethiopia if MOLSA obtains adequate assurance that his rights and dignity shall be respected in the country of employment.<sup>8</sup> Article 170(f) gives the Ministry the power to issue directives regarding the employment of nationals outside Ethiopia. Exercising this legal mandate, the

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<sup>6</sup> FDRE Constitution 1995

<sup>7</sup> FDRE Proclamation No, 691/2010

<sup>8</sup> FDRE Proclamation No, 691/2010



Ministry had issued a directive to determine the manner of employment of Ethiopian Nationals abroad.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, a report on the Labour Market Information Bulletin (2010) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) of 2008/2009 exhibits that 21, 256 Ethiopians migrated to Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, U.A.E, Yemen and other Gulf State Countries legally. Out of these migrants about 81.7% are female and 18.3% male. Migration is anticipated to offer the opportunity to a better income and life for Ethiopian women migrants. These women opted to migrate in order to escape from different social, economical and cultural constraints. Fransen & Kuschminder (2009) confirms that Women and children who migrate to the Middle East will often do so using a tourist visa and claim to be travelling for a religious pilgrimage.

According to Emebet (2002) as a result of labour needs of women trafficking flourished and women continued to suffer the consequences of their illegal migration. The problem drew the Government's attention and necessitated further regulation of migration for employment outside the country. Therefore, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) issued the Private Employment Agency Proclamation No. 104/1998. Due to this, the contractual agreement of Ethiopians who works in foreign countries are monitored, assessed and overlook by MoLSA before their departure from Ethiopia.

Even though such action has been taken on the side of the government, due to lack of advanced education and related constraints migrant women remain mostly involved in domestic work. A report by GTZ (2006) uncovered the fact that most Ethiopian women the only viable option to earn an income is through informal work. The reasons are varied but are mainly lack of skills, training and access to the formal labour market. A lot of women in the informal sector work as daily labourers or are involved in small trades, which they start

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Directive Issued to Determine the Manner of Employment of Ethiopian Nationals Abroad, 1994.

up with little capital because most have no property to use as collateral in order to qualify for credit assistance from financial institutions.

The above data reveals that the numbers of women who are migrating to the Gulf States is very high as compared to that of their male counterparts. This could be an indicator that the magnitude of women's migration in Ethiopia is profound. Such trends reveal how gendered migration is.

Additionally, it is underscored by Regt (2007) that mobility is a central element in discussions of women's migration and employment as domestic workers. On the one hand, the "feminization of migration", in which women cross international borders to take up paid work as domestics, indicates increased mobility of women. The replica of the same phenomenon is exhibiting itself in the case of Ethiopia where quite a significant segment of Ethiopian women are migrating to the Gulf States.

Similarly, a recent study by Fransen & Kuschminder (2009) shows that Ethiopian women who go to the Middle East initially reach this migration decision on the basis of their free will but they are usually misinformed about the position and circumstances waiting for them in the host country. The top destinations are Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates. Demoz (1998) also argues that the oil and capital rich Arab world particularly of the Gulf region is one of the major destinations of migrants mainly for employment.

Accordingly, the contractual agreement between the agent and the migrant women might be equivocal and in favour of the agent. For example a study by Emebet (2002) reveals that;

*Migrant women who leave the country through illegal agents usually borrow money to pay their agents, promising to pay back the loan once they begin earning their salaries. Many women remain in abusive working conditions because they owe money, either to their agents or whoever loaned them the money back home. The prohibition of agents receiving payment from workers for such services gives female migrant workers the freedom to leave their employment if conditions are not to their liking. (Emebet, 2002: 16)*

## **2.2.7 Experiences of the Migrant Domestic Workers**

### **2.2.7.1 Psychosocial Experience**

The number of female migrants has surpassed their male counterparts in some sectors, due to the increase in the demands for gender-neutral or gender-specified roles in service industries. As the CEDAW Committee pointed out, migrant women face specific challenges in the field of health throughout the migration cycles. Migrant women, for example, may be subject to sex- and gender-based discrimination such as mandatory HIV/AIDS or other testing without their consent, as well as sexual and physical abuse by agents and escorts during transit.<sup>10</sup>

As an outsider at their working place migrant domestic workers might have different experience. An article by Jureidini (2006) stated that domestic workers in who are performing household chores are categorized into three namely “lives-ins” who resides in the employer’s house hold, “freelancers” living and working conditions are much more controlled and the only difference is that they live on their own and “runaways” former live-ins and who decide to leave their employer because of various reasons. These three categories are the working status of the domestic workers.

Boyle *et al.*(1998) shows that the bias towards female urban bound/ward movement in many developing countries is related to employment factors. However, a narrow economic interpretation of this movement would assume that women are free to migrate when, in fact, they are constrained by social and cultural constructions of gender and the household.

Moreover, extensive literature stresses those women domestic workers basically experience three form of abuse that are:

*Verbal abuse like billeting or humiliating the domestic worker and call them as donkey is their usual experience. The second one is a threat of violence from the recruitment agencies that if an employer returns the maid to the agency, there is a strong likelihood that she will be punished in some way as*

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<sup>10</sup> Para 17. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers, December 2008, CEDAW/C/2009/WP.1/R

*a disciplinary measure. The second and the major threat of abuse derives from the practice of withholding passports and other identity papers that are held primarily by the employer and sometimes by the agency or denial of freedom of movement. Employees cannot leave the house for fear they may be caught by the police. The third one is exploitative working conditions including practices of withholding of wages (Jureidini, 2003: 3)*

Furthermore, a study by Birke, Hanlon, Atalay, Packer & Whitley (2009) illustrates that numerous potentially humiliating experiences following migration are described, that are degradation and associated with inhuman treatment. These include overwork, having insufficient food, being prey to physical and sexual assault, and having one's ethnic identity denigrated, impairment in terms of physical confinement like being locked up, without passport or money, fearful of escape and the consequence among other experiences/violations

Similarly, Birke *et al.* (2009) confirm that inhumane working condition, physical and sexual maltreatment, and denial of basic freedoms are the experiences of the majority of the migrant women. It also revealed that:

*Up on reaching their new place of employment, the women spoke of having to cope with impossibly high workloads, long hours and inadequate rest. Often the women reported being the only worker looking after an extended family, expected to be at their beck and call both day and night. Once employed in home, the women could expect to be shared by other families so that their responsibility would multiply. Being exhausted and overwhelmed by what was required of them, and linked this to the development of mental ill-health. (Birke *et al.*, 2009:5)*

As the life style and cultural experiences of the migrant's country of origin can be quite different from that of country of destination migrants might face difficulties in fitting into the new environment. A study by Boyle *et al.* (1998) emphasizes that many have argued that migration, in contrast to mobility, involves a social or cultural change in the life of the migrant.

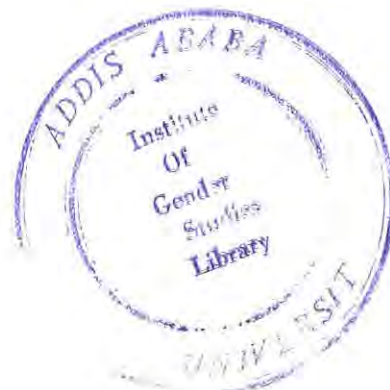
Accordingly, Bogue (1959) as cited in Boyle *et al.*(1998) stresses that migration describes a movement that ‘involve a complete change and readjustment of community affiliation of the individual.’ This behavioral perspective is useful if we are interested in identifying those people whose circumstances are considerably altered by the act of migrating. In line with this, Bottomley (1992) as cited in Boyle *et al.*(1998) emphasizes that, the issue of cultural change is particularly relevant when dealing with ethnic minority migration.

The consequence of high expectation in the country of destination and high ambition to improving their life, as confirmed by Birket et al (2009) results in the domestic worker facing a social defeat that has been advanced as a pertinent factor in the development of psychosis in migrants. The concept of social defeat in this context is characterized by humiliation, entrapment and thwarted expectations, reinforced by cultural isolation and the denigration of the women’s sense of cultural identity.

#### **2.2.7.2. Economic Experience**

According to neoclassical theory of migration, the existence of wage differentials is the main cause for migration. Migration is thus ‘labour reallocation’ in response to market needs (see, Boyele (1998). As a result, the economic experiences of migrants are one of the underlying causes of migration because in most cases migrants opt to migrate due to economic constraints in the country of origin. Unemployment and lack of income are some of the important pushing factors.

A report by Yoseph *et al.* (n.d.) shows that labour exploitation of victims of trafficking working as housemaids is the most commonly reported type of abuse. Labour exploitation is often related to the drafting and implementation of the employment contract, the conditions of work, the payment of salary and the termination of the employment contract. In most cases migrants are expected to sign employment contract that is written in Arabic after their arrival.



Furthermore, IOM (n.d.) indicated that Contracts of employment are also altered without the consent of the employee. This occurs even when the changes relate to basic terms of the contract such as the identity of the employer, the place of work and the type of work. Besides, salaries of Ethiopians working as housemaids are usually far below what is paid to migrant workers from other developing countries. According to one report, "*Filipinos, Sri Lankan citizens and citizens of other countries are paid USD200 per month. Ethiopians who speak English are paid USD150 while [Ethiopians who do not speak English] are paid USD100*"<sup>11</sup>.

Even though, women domestic workers have ambitions of to overcoming their low economic status after employment in the Gulf States, there are cases where their ambitions cannot be achieved as planned because of several difficulties that they face in the country of destination. The economic experience of migrant domestic workers as cited on Emebet (2002) is as follows:

*It is quite common that domestic workers do not get paid for the first three months because their employers insist that they will have to find out whether they are suitable for the post. Their employers may return them to their agents by saying they are not suitable, the agent places them in another post from which they may be returned again. Because of this some women stay a year or more without employment. (Emebet, 2002: 16)*

Such experiences of women domestic workers occur because of the opaque and ambiguous nature of their employment contracts. In addition as a migrant and as a result of their low status the domestic workers do not have equal rights to bargain for higher and timely salaries as well as to choose the particular place where they would like to be hired. IOM (n.d.) confirm that the withholding and denial of salary is a technique used to intimidate or prevent victims from terminating their employment. Employers may take advantage of the power imbalance between themselves and the employee to deprive employees of their salary. Reportedly, employers also take the savings of their employees through deceit and coercion.

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<sup>11</sup> The Reporter News Paper Meskerem 9, 1992 EC.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Design of the Study**

The philosophical assumption behind this study is social constructivist. Social constructivist argues that the meaning of knowledge is always constructed by human being. Based on this, the social reality and situational knowledge of the participants of the study are the base for this research. Reinharz (1992) states that the underlined principle of feminist research is making the invisible visible, brining the margin to the center, rendering the trivial important, putting the spotlight on women as competent actors and understanding women as a subjects in their own right rather than objects for men.

For the purpose of exploring the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian women domestic workers a qualitative research method has been employed. Qualitative research methods give a wide range of rooms for the informants of the research to express their thoughts and beliefs on the subject under discussion. Therefore, such methods enabled the researcher to pursue new and various instruments that encouraged the informants to give sufficient information. In this regard a study by Terre Balanche & Durrheim (1999) underscores that, reality is interpreted or constructed in qualitative research design. Accordingly, the real life experience of the informants can be constructed or actualized.

Similarly, Creswell (2007) states that qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problem inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. We use qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to tell their stories and hear their voices. Thus, by using qualitative research, the stories, voices and situational knowledge of Gulf States returnee women domestic workers can be revealed.

Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1998) remark that qualitative research can refer to persons' lives, life experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations. Similarly, as the informants of this research are individuals who experienced domestic work in foreign countries, their life experience both in the country of origin and destination, their emotions and feelings while they were away from their loved ones, the cultural difference between their country of origin and destination as well as their interaction, impression and expectations after their arrival to the country of destination can be extensively described using data generated by qualitative research methods.

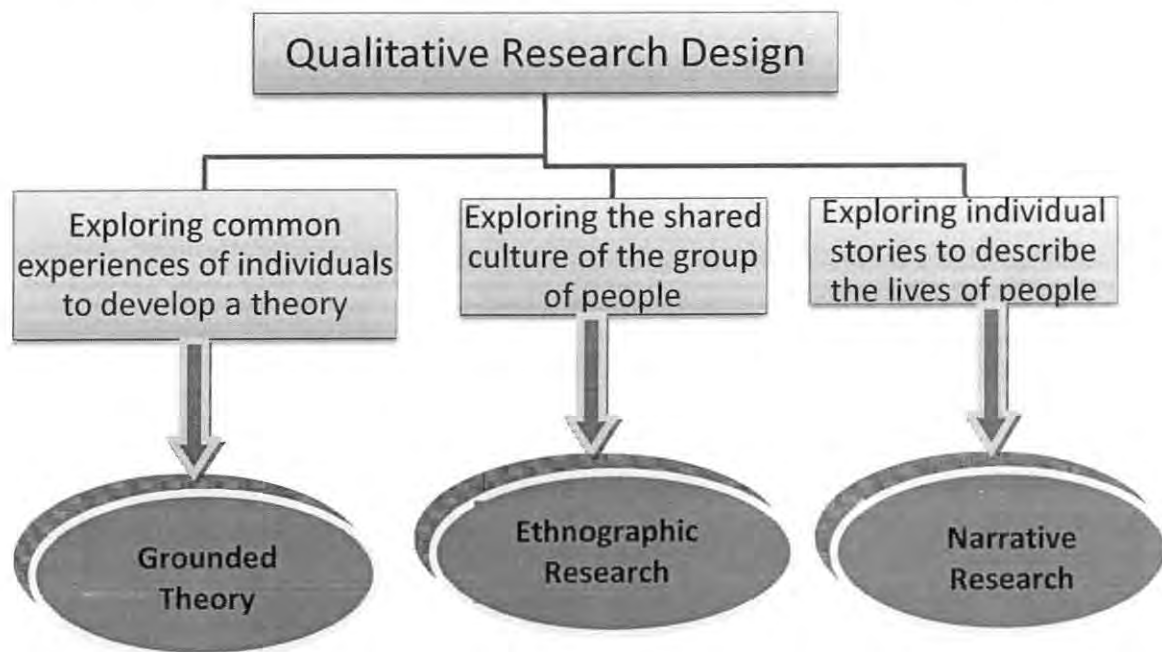
Likewise, as Creswell (2007) underlines, we conduct qualitative research when we want a literary, flexible style that conveys stories or poems – because we want to understand the context of the settings in which participants in a study address a problem or an issue. Therefore, among the five qualitative research approaches, narrative research approach was employed to conduct this study. The actual words that have been reported by the informants of the study can be properly spelt out using narrative approach; such approach gives a room to typify their own view point.

Through narrative research approach, this study tried to uncover the psychosocial and economic experiences of GSRWDW. Their lived experience in the country of destination and their economic and social status before they migrate are the foundations of this study. The phenomenon of experiences of GSRWDW has not been addressed in many research works. Besides, the whole scene of their unique experience (economic and psychosocial) as a women and an outsider who is looking for a better life needs to be recorded. Daynes (2006) as cited in Creswell (2007) describes that narrative research can be both a method and the phenomenon (sequences of events) of study. As a method, it begins with the experiences and as a phenomenon it can express lived and told stories of individuals. Similarly, the critical and conditional life style of GSRWDR can be portrayed using narrative approach.

Moreover, Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008) remark that narrative is always defined first of all as a kind of language. Yet research that focuses on narrative as an expression of individual experience, or as a mirror of social realities, tends to bypass the language of stories in order to focus on their meanings, or the social positioning they produce or reflect. In the same manner, by using narrative research method, the past and the present social positioning and realities of GSRWDW have been explored. Riessman (2000) argues that narrative approach allows systematic study of personal experience and meaning, particularly significant genre for representing and analysing identity; it allows for systematic study of experience (for feminist research) and changing meaning of conditions that affect women disproportionately – domestic violence, reproductive health and poverty. Based on this, the psychosocial and economic experiences of the informants of the study have been portrayed.

Figure 1: Research Design

The following diagram shows the primary uses of qualitative research design



Source: Creswell (2002)

As the above diagram shows, the major objective of narrative research is to explore and describe the lives of people. Accordingly, for the purpose of portraying the psychosocial and economic experiences of women domestic workers, narrative design seems a more appropriate approach that can excavate the unrevealed experiences of GSRWDW.

A study by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) explains that we don't experience life as a story in our everyday life. But ontologically, the narrative approach views life as a narrative or storied reality. Therefore, knowledge rooted in such a reality is seen as constructed in the narrative and expressed in language (epistemology). The study intensely followed a biographical narrative study that recorded the psychosocial and economic experiences of GSRWDW. The unheard stories and the voices of the researched shall be shared and this research tried to explore, discover, understand or describe incidents, phenomena and situational knowledge of the researched.

Further, De Lange (2010) states that the narrative approach, also called narrative inquiry or narrative analysis, reflects the narrative experiences of the present through the conversation or story that is co-created or constructed. This approach is therefore, applicable to this study as it relates to exploration of the psychosocial and economic experiences of GSRWDW.

Similarly, Lindsay (2006) defines narrative inquiry as 'the discovery and exploration of how an experience matters or is significant, in the construction of identity and knowledge'. This echoes the opinion of McAdams (2005) who states that 'integrative life narratives serve to reconstruct reality in such a way as to give life unity, purpose and meaning'. Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 2000) as cited in Creswell (2007) utilize the method of narrative analysis to view the reconstruction of stories; accordingly, narrative life history and storied life compositions reflect the person's life history and his/her social milieu.

To analyze the participant, the main concept highlighted by Ollernshaw and Creswell (2002) as cited in Creswell (2007) states that 'restorying' is the process of recognizing the stories into some general type of framework. This framework may consist of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements of the story (e.g. time, place, plot, and scene) and then



rewriting the stories to place them within chronological sequence. The stories represent both personal and social experiences and they are continuous. In this regard, the unrevealed and untold story of women domestic workers can be transcribed directly using their own words of expression through narration method.

### **3.2 Site of the Study**

The site of this study was Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital (ASMH). Amanuel Mental Specialized Hospital is the only specialized mental hospital in Ethiopia. Citizens from all regional states visit ASMH whenever they experience any form of mental illness. The same is true for women domestic workers who return home with any form of psychological problems. Due to this, in order to approach the target informant and collect primary data ASMH is selected.

ASMH is located in Addis Ababa, Addis Ketema Sub-City. The mission of Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital is to improve mental health, give treatment and health education, voluntary counselling and testing service and training for counsellors. The major objective of ASMH is to improve mental health and HIV/AIDS related psychological problems. (<http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/english/moh/information/pages/StAmanuelMentalSpecializedHospital.aspx>)

### **3.3 Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary data sources were used to conduct this research. In order to triangulate the collected data three methods of data collection strategies have been employed i.e. in-depth interviews with the informants, in-depth interview with key informants and archival records. Using these data sources enabled the researcher to collect sufficient data that are very helpful to conduct this research.

Primary data have been collected from GSRWDW that were getting medical treatment at Amanuel Mental Specialized Hospital. Similarly, key informants who have substantial

knowledge and direct information about the topic under discussion participated in the study. Key informants were from AMSH, an individual who used to live and work in Saudi Arabia as an official delegate of government ministry office, an individual who produced a TV show on the lives of Ethiopians who were working in Bahrain and two individuals from Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Development and Inter Church Aid Commission Refugees and Returnees Affairs Department (EOTC/DICAC) a humanitarian organization that works on returnees and refugees have been interviewed.

As a secondary data source newspapers, reports, video recordings of the TV show called *Shay Buna* that were produced and disseminated by Gebeyanu Promotion and Advertisement Agency about the life of Ethiopian women domestic workers in the Gulf States and a voice recorded narrative of one GSREWDW who faced physical abuse and experienced psychosocial problem, have been critically assessed and reviewed.

### **3.4 Informants of the Study**

The sample informants were selected based on two strategies. As Creswell (2007) elaborates, critical case and convenience sampling strategies have been employed; in a narrative study, sampled individuals need to have stories to tell about their lived experience. All the informants of the study were GSRWDW who faced psychosocial problem as a result of different traumatic and life threatening experiences they encountered in the country of destination. (i.e. experiences like thrown away in the corpse room).

For narrative approach, as Creswell (2007) underlines, the sample size can be one or two/few more individuals. Due to this, three GSRWDW who experienced mental distress and hospitalized at AMSH have been purposefully selected. Moreover, two GSRWDW who were treated and recovered at AMSH upon their arrival from Gulf States were also purposefully selected. All of the informants used to work as a domestic worker in the Gulf States, but returned back home with different psychosis problems.

The process of selecting informants has been done in consultation with psychiatric professionals at AMSH. Though half of the informants were clinically admitted and getting treatment at the hospital, presently, they are in a stable condition and are confirmed that they are in a very good mental stability. In addition, in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected informants have been interviewed twice.

These individuals are subordinate groups and marginalized based on their class, race and gender. Therefore, critical and convenience selection of informants have been done to gather data on their economic and psychosocial experience as a domestic worker in the Gulf States and to assess their life as a domestic worker in foreign countries. Besides, Criswell (2007) states that the general guideline of qualitative research is not only to study few sites or individuals, but also to collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied. The intent of qualitative research is not, however, to generalize the information, but to elucidate the particular, the specific.

As a key informant, two psychiatric doctors from AMSH, an individual who used to live and work in Saudi Arabia as an official delegate of government ministry office, an individual who was invited to Bahrain to hear the voices of Ethiopians who were working in Bahrain and record all their thoughts in order to write and disseminate information about their situation both for the public and government and two individuals from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Development & Inter church Aid Commission Refugees and Returnees Affairs Department were selected purposefully.

Qualitative in-depth interview were made with key informants who know what is going on in the community. The purpose of key informant interviews is to collect information from a wide range of people including community leaders, professionals, or residents who have firsthand knowledge about the issue under discussion and with their particular knowledge and understanding of migrant workers.

The major reason behind employing key informant interview is that study is that individuals who have direct relation with the target informants provide sufficient and supplementary information regarding psychosocial and economic experiences of returnee domestic workers.

### **3.5 Instruments of Data Collection**

Interview was the first tool that allowed the research to dig out trustworthy and valid data. In order to gather data each informants has been interviewed twice. It also permitted the researcher to identify the major concept behind the issue under discussion. In-depth interviews are very essential to uncover the relevant information concerning the topic under discussion. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) state that interviews have distinct advantage of enabling the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and therefore, gain their cooperation. They also enable the researcher to clarify ambiguous responses, and to raise appropriate follow-up questions to get further information.

Thus, semi-structured interview questions have been used to collect data; such types of interview questions are most useful to investigate personal issues of the informants. It enabled the researcher to some extent to be flexible in generating questions that might come out of the response of the interviewees. This results deeper knowledge and understanding of the topics or viewpoints that are forwarded by informants. Besides, it also allows the informants to respond to questions freely without limitation. Further such technique is very helpful to collect larger data. Interview questions for this study have been developed in accordance with the objectives and the research question of the study.

Besides, for a narrative study, Crazarniawask as cited in Creswell (2007) mentions three ways of collecting data for stories: a) recording spontaneous incidents of storytelling, b) eliciting stories through interviews and C) asking for stories through medium such as internet. Based on this, eliciting stories of the informants through the interview method have been conducted.

### **3.6 Procedures of Data Collection**

The researcher visited Amanuel Mental Specialized Hospital for period of two months. During the first visit, an appointment has been made with the medical director of hospital to submit the letter that introduces briefly and the main purpose and objective of the research. As per the appointment, the researcher presented the major objective of the research to the medical director at AMSH.

According to the formal procedure of AMSH, such activity should be endorsed by the Medical Board of the hospital. After acquiring the appropriate endorsement from the medical board the process of data collection started in consultation with the psychiatrist doctor and psychiatrist nurses. Three of the informants that are in AMSH were interviewed in their respective ward. Whereas, the remaining two informants were interviewed at Agar Shelter, the place where they were resided after they discharged from AMSH.

After the first round interviews were conducted, the second round interview took place to ensure the collected data are accurate and consistent. The researcher went to AMSH 20 times within the two months period.

### **3.7 Validity and Trustworthiness of the Study**

Validity in qualitative research according to Creswell (2009) means the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. Based on this, in order to ensure validity of this study different data sources of information have been triangulated. This was done by examining evidence from different sources of data.

Besides, to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings, informants of the study were interviewed twice for the purpose of confirming the precision of their responses were precise. Accordingly, the recorded data were checked twice to avoid obvious mistakes during the transcription process. The words and phrases of the informants were directly incorporated to give more space for their standpoint.

On the other hand, Creswell (2009) emphasizes that a good qualitative research contains comments by the researcher and reflectivity is a core characteristic of a qualitative research. Based on this, as the study explores a sensitive gender issue, as well as socioeconomic issues of the society the researcher's sense of belongingness might be reflected while the interpretation of the findings molded.

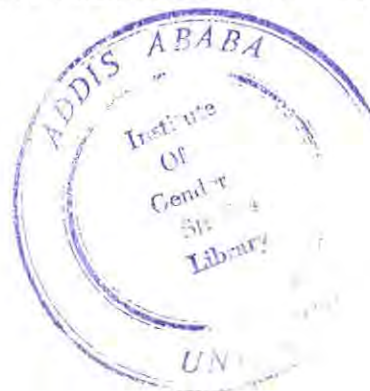
### **3.8 Data Analysis Procedures**

After the completion of the data collection, each data were organized for interpretation and analysis. Each data was given codes in order to be ready for description. Then the data were placed chronologically in order to be classified as per the research question of the study. Then after, each data was transcribed and translated into English.

A study by Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) describes that narrative research can be analyzed based on the following approach: a) focusing on interaction, situation and continuity b) in a more linear, narrow problem-solution approach and c) focusing on events, sequences and actions.

Among the three dimensional approach, focusing on the interaction, situation and continuity approach was implemented to undertake this research. As testified by Creswell (2007), interaction denotes – the personal and social interaction, situation denotes – the place and continuity denotes – the past, present and future. Using this approach the overall psychosocial and economic experience of the domestic workers had been narrated.

Each story of the informant had been interpreted and presented in an ascending order; it started from the past psychosocial and economic experiences of informants and continued to their experience after they migrate. It also covered the present status. In each part of the story, the personal and social interactions of the informants were given emphasis. The data collected in a narrative study had been



analyzed and arranged in a chronology of unfolding events and turning points or epiphanies. Finally, the re-storying process had been done first by organizing the key codes into a sequence; then, organizing stories and rewriting of the stories based on narrative elements in chronological sequence was the last step.

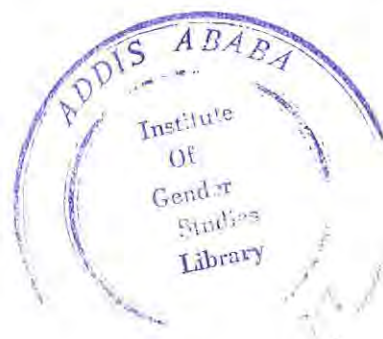
Representing visualization of the narration focused on the processes, theories, unique and general features of the life of the informants. Relevant theories that are commensurate with the theme of the research were integrated in the data interpretation and discussion process. Interpretations and discussions of archival records were also presented to support the substantial facts that were narrated by the informants of the study.

The above mentioned processes led to the writing of analytic abstraction of the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee domestic workers. Such forms of writing incorporate a) the overall economic and psychosocial experiences of women domestic workers before and after they migrate, b) feminist theories that are related to the economic and psychosocial experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian domestic workers, and c) the unique and general features of their life.

### **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

While conducting this research asking questions and recording as well as taking notes were the formal and underlined ethical considerations. The following ethical considerations were applied in the process of data collection and all informants of this research were informed about the purposes of the research and issues of confidentiality before the process of the interview proceeds.

- Before the data collection started at the site of the study, the researcher submitted a letter to ASMH to introduce the purpose and aim of the research



- to the Hospital management and thereby obtain permission to conduct the fieldwork.
- The researcher informed the informants of the study that their participation in the research is based on their consent.
  - The researcher developed an informed consent form; the consent form has been read before each interview proceeds. This form acknowledges the participants' rights protected during the data collection process. Some elements of the consent form include:
    - identification of the researcher
    - indication of how the participants were selected
    - identification of the purpose of the research
    - identification of the benefits for participating
    - identification of the level and type of participant involvement
    - guarantee of confidentiality of the participant
    - assurance that the participant can withdraw at any time
  - During the data analysis and interpretation process the researcher tried to protect the anonymity, roles and incidents of individuals.
  - The researcher also kept the privacy of the participants in case of anticipating the possibility of harmful intimate information being disclosed during the data collection process.
  - Once the collected data were analyzed the researcher kept the data for a reasonable period of time and discarded it so that it would not fall into the hands of other researchers.
  - During the interpretation of the data, the researcher tried her level best to provide accurate account of the information.

## Chapter Four

### **Narrations, Findings and discussion**

This chapter incorporates two sections. The first section is the narrations of the informants of the study. Five narrative stories of the informants of the study are included in the first section. In each narrative the lived experiences of the GSRWDW are described. Each narrative has sequences of event (plot) structure. The second section is the finding and discussion. The narrative of each informant is translated and presented as it is.

### **4.1 Narrations**

The following are the narrations of five GSRWDW; the narrations briefly explained individual experiences. As the country of destination is in the same region, in some cases the GSRWDW share some common cultural and economic experiences. All GSRWDW have individual reasons and stance to migrate and work as a domestic worker. Generally, these reasons are cultural, economic and social that is embedded in the social order.

#### GSRWDW I

Summary: The narrator is a 27 year old lady. She is single and living with her parents. Presently, she is not working. She is the last born in her family; she has three brothers and four sisters. She completed primary school. She went to Dubai in 1996 EC. She experienced mental illness while she was working in Dubai. She was admitted at Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital psychiatric treatment and discharged after two months.

*I am the last born to my family. Because of this I used to get extra treatment from all of my family members. I used to work as a sales girl and earn ETB 130 before I went to Dubai. My father used to work and now he is retired. However, we used to have about five cows from which we acquired milk for home consumption and surplus for income generation. My elder sister was the first one to go to Dubai. She is now living in London. She stayed in Dubai for about three years. She went to London together with the family that she worked for and ran away without their knowledge. She is now having a better life. She is also the one who is assisting our parents. Since she has got a good income, she covered expenses for one of my sister to get an opportunity of working in Dubai. Due to this, my sister began to work in*

*Dubai as a domestic worker and this was a success for our family. Both of them were assisting us. I had never thought of going to the Gulf States, so do my parents, sisters and brothers.*

*Hence, I requested my sister in London to send me some money so that I can start my own business here in Addis Ababa. Her reply was positive; she agreed and sent me ETB 60, 000. I was very happy for receiving that amount of money so that I could start my own business. Besides, I saw a bright future together with my fiancé, an engineer, whom I love very much more than anything in this world. We have been together for about three year and every time, he was telling me that we shall get married within a very short period of time, that is after he settled things that are related to school expenses of his sisters and brothers. He was the one only who used to cover all their school expenses.*

*I told my fiancé that as soon as I receive money from my older sister I will start my own business. I asked him to advise me on what type of business I should embark on upon receiving upon receiving 60, 000 birr<sup>12</sup> from my sister. I have also told him that, this is a good opportunity for us to start our own life because I can assist him financially so that nothing will stop us to get married and live together. However, he came up with a new idea, he advised me that the money that my sister sent will not take me anywhere, it is a very small amount of money to start a well established business firm. Therefore, he proposed that 'I think now, it is good to save the money that your sister sent in the bank; we should have additional money after that we can establish our own Construction/Engineering firm. However, both of us should work very hard'. And then he asked me like this, 'Are you willing to go to the Gulf State and make some money for about two years? When you get back to your homeland, we would get married right away.' I paused, thought about the issue for a while and agreed up on what my fiancé proposed. As per the plan of my fiancé we saved the money that my sister sent in the bank. I have told my parents that I also should go to Dubai like my sisters; they were surprised of my idea. Because, earlier to that date, they knew that I have never thought of going like my sister did. They tried to advise me to work here using the money that I have but I refused. I asked my sister in Dubai to start the process from that end, within 15 days the process finalised. I paid 7000 birr, for the agency and I went to Dubai.*

*My first employment in Dubai was in a large family and my monthly salary was 500 Dirham<sup>13</sup>. (Equivalent to 2000 – 2250 Ethiopian birr) There were seven kids in the family. I had a Pilipino co-worker. She was responsible for cooking food and my responsibility was general cleaning (including the compound, the house etc). After I worked for one month, my*

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<sup>12</sup> Local currency in Ethiopia

<sup>13</sup> Foreign currency of UAE

*co-worker ran away because she was raped and as a result she got pregnant after being raped. It is forbidden for a woman to become pregnant before getting married. Therefore, the only option that she had was to run away. After this I started to work alone and all the tasks of my co-worker became mine. It was very tiresome. I have been covering all the household chores like cooking, cleaning, etc including gardening. I used to start my daily chores at 4 o'clock in the morning and work until 1 o'clock in the midnight. I slept only three hours. Besides, I didn't get enough food to eat. Most of the time they used to buy packed food from the supermarket. They didn't want to give me because they didn't think that I am a human being. Therefore, I used to eat foods either from the garbage or by hiding and put aside some food from what they bought from the supermarket.*

*Tough, I didn't exactly figure the reason behind the owner of the house was not looking at me with good eyes. She was always suspicious towards me and I was not comfortable of such character of my employer. Since the weather at that place was very hot, the house had AC in each room. One day while I was performing my daily chores the lady came in and switched off the AC without my knowledge. It was a terrible moment. I didn't know that it was switched off. I started losing my breath. I tried to run into another room and after that I lost my conscious. After some hours I found myself on the floor and this incident scared me a lot. I realized that she intended to kill me or avoid me out of her place.*

*However, I reminded myself that I left my place of origin to have some money in my pocket. So I tried to convince myself that I should overcome such challenges to achieve my objective. After all I asked my fiancé on how I could get back home with empty pocket? I told myself that I should be very strong! Time is passing and it became two months since I came from Ethiopia. I didn't get my salary to date and I asked Madame<sup>14</sup> once and she told me that it is good for me if I get paid every three months. Though I was not convinced by this arrangement, I didn't want to oppose her idea so I agreed and kept quiet. After all, I didn't have any choice than waiting for those three months. I was thinking of telling this to my sister in Dubai, but I was afraid to call her. I had her telephone number but I was afraid to call her because the Madam was always telling me that she put her phone on the recorder and if I tried to call anyone she can catch me easily. One day, I remember that it was about 10 o'clock in the evening, no one was around this home because all family members went to have refreshment. In Dubai, since the weather is very hot during the day, people prefer to sleep and go out for any kind of business in the evening. I was performing my routine tasks, at the middle; I saw a black cat came out of my bed room. I was shocked. I tried to beat the cat but it didn't go. I started to cry because I was scared. In the past I heard that Arabs were*

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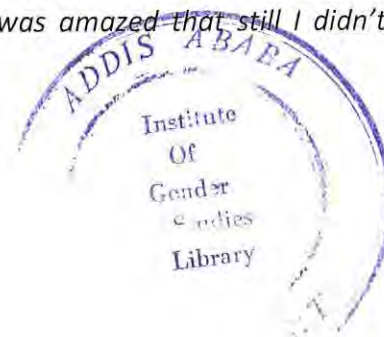
<sup>14</sup> Domestic workers use the word 'Madam' to call their female employers

*skilled in witchcrafts and can do whatever they want. I considered that cat as if it was assigned to look after what I am doing in their absence. I shouted and shouted and no one heard me and the cat was still there.*

*While I was shouting in the compound, one Ethiopian domestic worker in the neighbourhood heard my voice. She came to the fence of the compound and asked me why I was shouting and crying like that. I couldn't believe that I had someone who could speak my own language. I was thinking like she might be an angel and told her what I saw. I also told her that the black cat was not a real cat but a human being that changed into a cat. She was confused. I gave her the telephone number of my sister and begged her to call to my sister immediately. I also told her that I wouldn't stay in this place, I begged her to the extremes. She tried to calm me down and went out to call my sister. Immediately, she just got back to me, and took me outside of the compound. She called my sister using her cell phone. I couldn't believe that I was out of that place which was horrifying. My sister gave me the address of the place that she was living. She has a free visa (a resident permit that is renewable each year) so that she is living with her friends in downtown.*

*The Ethiopian lady showed me the place where I could get a taxi. She gave me some dirham to pay for the taxi and I went to my sister's place. Uhh, finally I had reached the place where my sister lives. She was waiting for me at the side of the street where the taxi dropped me. It was just like a dream (*Hulum neger be hilme yemihone neew yemeselegne*). I told my sister everything about what I had gone through. She tried to encourage me and told me that I was reacting in such a way because it was my first time experience to be out of my country as well as my family. I started to live with my sister, but I was not mentally stable. I was always threatened and stressful. It was from this time I started to experience mental distress.*

*After staying at my sister's place for about two weeks, I realized that I should start working. I was still with empty pocket. I didn't had any of my salaries for the last three months I worked for. I told my sister that I should work but I earnestly told her that I would never work in the similar situation of my last employment. She informed me that there is another arrangement of working but it is still domestic work. She told me that I can work during the day and stay the night together with them but such type of work is illegal and if I happened to be caught by the police, I would definitely be imprisoned. But I said I prefer to take the risk of being caught by the police than working as a permanent domestic worker. Then after, I started to work in one Indian house with 700 dirham per month. I liked this arrangement. The salary is better than the previous one and I had freedom at least during the evening. I worked in the same place for one year and 6 months. Finally I quitted my job because I had a bad headache continuously and started to be absent from work. I was amazed that still I didn't had a*



*significant amount of money in my pocket. The reason was that I should cover expenses of my food as well as contribute to cover expense of the rent of the house that we used to live in. Life is very expensive. We spent all the money that we got out of thirty days as casual workers. When I sat down and asked myself about benefit that I gained out of this harsh situation, I was really got frustrated, stressed and sometimes depressed. I said like 'ke hagere kemesedede beker men aterefku?' (What is my benefit rather than I migrated from my homeland?)*

*I came to Dubai for two years and it is now going to be two years but as I and my fiancé had planned, I didn't have any money to get back to home. So, I decided to stay for additional one year. I called to my fiancé and informed him the situation. He sounded like he did not understand my view point. He reacted like I was enjoying my stay in Dubai and not willing to get back home. His reaction annoyed me a lot and how could I explain for him things which he had never experienced? I preferred to keep quiet. Health wise, I can say that I wasn't in favourable condition but I should Work! Work! Work! On some occasion I preferred to be alone, not to talk to anyone and hate to see people but I didn't know the reason. My sister insisted to take me to the hospital, but I was afraid to visit a doctor because I heard Arabs hate black people. Finally, when my pain became severe, I agreed to visit a doctor. They told me that my illness is stress, and gave me some medication.*

*I began to work for another employer, which in my case is the third one. This time I started to get used to working conditions. This was my last employment in Dubai. The Madam was not a good lady. She used to mistreat me and always shouting at me. She had never talked peacefully but I tolerated her behavior because I didn't want to be employed by another person like her. In addition, I used to work under pressure on daily basis but this one is preferable than what I experienced from my first employment. In such situation, I worked for about seven months and quit. Still, I didn't have any penny. I started becoming frustrated daily. Anything could make me angry and I stopped to talking to people. My sister tried her best to comfort me but she couldn't succeed. She finally called our elder sister in London and told her the situation. They discussed the matter and agreed that they were going to give me some money and for me to get back home and get married as planned. Then after telling my fiancé that I had decided to go back home so that we could marry as planned, he said that he was eager to have my accompany. I was very happy to hear this. My sister gave me some money and I bought some items for my wedding. Also my sister in London sent me money and a wedding dress. Still I can't say that I was fully healthy.*

*I came back home, I was very happy to see my parents and my fiancé. I really missed them a lot. This was the day that I have been overjoyed. I told my parents that I will marry*

*immediately, they were very happy. I told my fiancé the amount of money that I brought. He was not that much impressed. His response disappointed me and I preferred to be silent on this issue. Here also, after my arrival though I was surrounded by my family and my fiancé, the bad feeling that I had in Dubai was still disturbing me. My new character was strange for my parents. I think my sister in Dubai informed them that I had experienced some illness during my stay in Dubai. And, as far as my fiancé was concerned I noticed that things were not like they used to be. One day my mother asked me to take me to the holy water, Tsebe<sup>15</sup>. I asked why? She told me that since I had stayed for almost three years outside my country of origin, it is very good to have Tsebel. I agreed and we went to a well known holy place around Entoto. There, something strange happened. An evil spirit shouted while I entered into the Tsebel. I was not conscious by that time. What I am now telling you are what people told me. I stayed at the Tsebel for fourteen days and I became fully healthy.*

*As we just got back home, as I told you things were not the way they used to be with my fiancé. A very disastrous situation in my life happened. That is, my fiancé told me that he hadn't made his mind to marry me. It was very difficult for me to accept such sour reality. After that, my illness and mental distress gradually resurfaced. My parents brought to Amanuel. I got psychiatric treatment for about three months and got better. Psychiatrists told me that the root cause for my illness was stress, and they advised me to avoid stress as much as possible. There are medications that I am taking starting from that time, and when I stopped to take those medications and started to think about my life in the past, my illness intensified and I lost my conscious. I have been treated in Amanuel Specialised Mental Clinic since 1999 EC. Most of the time, I have a three months appointment to visit the psychiatrists. I get my treatment Amanuel and go back home with my medications. But when I quit taking medications I get admitted at Amanuel for close follow up.*

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<sup>15</sup> Spiritual water that believed cure people from any form of illness

## GSRWDW II

Summary: The narrator is a 26 years old girl. She is single and living with her parents. Presently, she is not working. She is the 4<sup>th</sup> child for her parents. She has three brothers and two sisters. She attended elementary school up to grade 6. She worked in four different countries of the Gulf States since 1993 EC. She was 16 years old by then. She experienced mental illness while she was working in Qatar; she is now attending psychiatric treatment at Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital.

*I am living with parents, I went to Dubai in 1993 EC, I was 16 years old. I can say that my parents are very poor. My father used to work as a guard in one private company. My mother is a house wife. The income that my father used to earn was not enough for the whole family. I used to see that most of the girls in my neighbourhood used to go to the Gulf States and make good money. Therefore, I asked my mother to send me to one of the Arab countries. She agreed upon my idea. However, we didn't have any penny to cover expenses for the agents. Therefore, my mother borrowed money and sent me Dubai. I was so happy because I dreamed of the money that I would get out of my employment and what I would have to do to give a better life to my parents. The money we borrowed was ETB 7000, my monthly salary was 500 Dirham, (Equivalent to 2000 – 2250 Ethiopian birr) therefore, I paid back that money within the first year of my employment. Since I am from a very poor family, I went to Dubai mainly to make some money and support my family. 'Beteseboche Endiyafilachew neew Dubai yehedkut'. I worked in Dubai for about four years.*

*I used to work as a general cleaner, because I was a very hard working person, Madame used to appreciate my commitment. On top of that, she was happy of my hard working. Therefore, she added some amount of money on my salary. The first phase of my contractual agreement finished after two years. So that I came to Ethiopia at the end of the employment contract and visited my family. During that time, I didn't have a significant amount of money in my hand. This was because, I paid back the money that I borrowed and used to send money for my family. I stayed here for about two months and got back to Dubai for another two years. Even though I was working under pressure, my employer in Dubai was a very nice person, so that I preferred to work with her than changing to another place. As I mentioned earlier, I decided to migrate to support my family, therefore, I used to send about 75% of my income for my family. When the contract for the last two years expired, again I came to visit my family. At that time I had had ETB 30,000 in my hand. In addition, I bought clothes, shoes and other materials for my parents, sisters and brothers. I was really happy of doing such*

things for my family. I also planned to buy a portion of land using the money that I brought and built a house. However, my plan has not worked out. When I came here I spent the money with different insignificant expenses, so that I couldn't manage to achieve my target.

During my vacation here in Addis Ababa, most of my friends advised me that it is good to change the place of working, as per their advice I decided to go to another country rather than Dubai. I fulfilled all the requirements to go to Beirut. I paid all the expenses from my pocket and went to Beirut, Lebanon. Unfortunately, the working condition in Beirut was not as good as Dubai. I used to work as a cleaner as well. But, I worked for two families though it was stated on my contract that I only be employed by only one family. It was tiresome, boring and exhaustive. I worked in such condition for two years; however, unfortunately, I couldn't get half of my salary. My employer refused to give me my salary each time when I requested them. I had received all my payments of the first six months. After that when I asked for my salary they only gave me different reasons. Besides, the husband was always trying to harass me and chasing after me while Madame was not around. Sometimes he was trying to cheat me by showing more amount of money. I was really afraid of such situations and tried to hide out of his sight or try to be with their little kids until he went out of the house. I was very sure that if Madame was aware of such situation, she definitely would take an immediate action against me. I really get frustrated when I think of such incidents.

Generally, my stay in Beirut was not good, I finished the two years contract and I came back to Ethiopia. As I mentioned earlier the worst thing is still I didn't make a significant amount of money, as I said, they refused to pay half of my salary. I tried to have some advice from other Ethiopians who worked as domestic workers; they told me that it is better for me to leave this country than trying to claim to the police or other legal bodies. The reason they gave me was that both the police and any other legal body don't have any interest to hear about the problems of non citizens except Lebanese or Arabs. Specifically, no one gave any attention for black people like Ethiopians and citizens of Asian countries. By the way in Beirut, the majority of domestic workers are Indians, Ethiopians, and Philipinos. Therefore, I just left that country without claiming and having half of my salary.

When I came here, I found my family in a very tragic incident. My father committed suicide three months ago. My mother, brothers and sisters agreed not to tell me because they didn't want to disturb me in foreign country. I couldn't believe what I was hearing about that tragic event. I had never expected that such tragic situation would happen in our family. This was one of the disastrous situations in my life and at my tender age. I was trying to give a better life for my family, and go to the country where no one could stand by my side, by taking such decision, I thought that I was going to provide my family's needs and I was hoping that the

*future was going to be bright and things could be better if I worked hard. But what I was planning and what God had intended for me couldn't meet. I felt guilty consciousness of not being here while my father passed away. That time was really a bad time for me.*

*After staying about for four months, I told my mom that I should get back to work. As a matter of fact I don't want to go to Lebanon, but I prefer to go to Bahrain. I went to Bahrain and worked only for three months. Generally speaking I didn't like Bahrain; I hate the place, the people and the list is endless. That's why I decided to come back within such a very short period of time. My parents were not happy of my decision. Especially, my mother warned me that I should be very stable. She said that I was spending my money by going and coming. She blamed me as if I was wasting the money that I pay for the agents.*

*Once again, I started a process to go to Qatar, the process finalized within a very short period of time. The family that I work for in Qatar was a very big family. My responsibility was to babysit the kids, take them to school and bring them back home together with the driver and taking care of the old lady, who was the mother of Madame. This old lady lost both of her hands and legs. She used a wheelchair and my responsibility was assisting her whenever she needed help. My stay in Qatar was very challenging. It was very difficult to stay with the old lady. She didn't have any positive attitude towards me; as a result, I was really worried of staying with her while the kids went to school. Even though it was part of my job, I can say that it was a relief when I went out with the kids as it was just like a leisure time for me.*

*The old lady was always shouting and insulting at me. She sometimes called me 'barya' (slave). Since I worked for about eight years in the Arab countries, I can speak and listen Arabic properly, so that I can hear each word that was coming out of her mouth. Such situations frustrated me a lot and I sometimes wished I could to run out of that house. There are incidents like when she could come to my bedroom at midnight and shout at me while I was sleeping by accusing me that I had not put something that she needed at the side of her bed or any other similar reasons. Such experience in my working place and the frustration of losing my father were always disturbing me a lot. I was thinking as if I will also lose other family members while I was in Qatar etc. Generally I was not happy, stable and most of the time I stressed a lot. I managed to work like this for about seven months. When the situation became out of my control, I lost my resistance and ran away.*

*I went to the office of the representative of my agent and reported the whole situation. I requested them, I can't say that it was a request actually I begged them to allocate me to another working place. They hesitated; in the meantime, my employers reported to the agent that I ran away by stealing some money, and other valuable materials. They also claimed that if I failed to return back home they would report the situation to the police and put me*

*in prison. I refused to get back to their place, but the agent couldn't help me. They told me to get back to my work for the time being and if such problem became persistent they would look for another working place. I didn't have any choice, I had no one at that place, I had nowhere to go and I had no option. I got back to my employer's place by force. I suspected that things might worsen but I didn't have any choice. I told myself that everything has been going wrong while I went out of my country (hulum neger yetebelashew hageren teche seweta neew).*

*After such incident, the thing that I can properly remember was the day that I got back to their home, I remember that after I got back I worked only for two weeks, Madame tried to beat me by throwing anything that is in her hands. Verbal and physical abuse became my daily experience, after that I started to be aggressive. I started to feel insecure; I never slept during the evening because I was afraid that they might kill me while I slept. My life became full of stress; as a result I couldn't resist staying in such condition. Again I ran away, however, on my way to the agent's office, police officers caught me, they asked me for either an ID Card or a passport. I told them that I don't have, they immediately imprisoned me. After staying for ten days in the prison, they deported me. I came here with empty hand, as I told you I worked about nine years in the Arab countries, but I didn't do anything for myself. Of course, I tried to give a better life for my family; however, nothing has been changed. All these things really hurt my feelings, that's why I am here.*

### GSRWDW III

Summary: The narrator is a 19 years old female. She is single and living with her parents. She is from Asala( a place in south eastern part of Ethiopia) Presently, she is not working. She is the 4<sup>th</sup> child in her family. She has five brothers and three sisters. She attended elementary school up to grade 6. She went to Dubai in the year 2002 and stayed there for nine months. She is now attending psychiatric treatment at Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital.

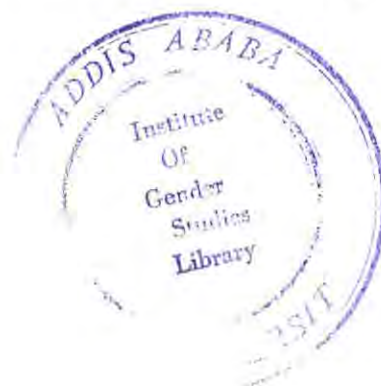
*My mother is single and my father passed away five years ago. My father was a farmer and he had a portion of land and after he passed away life became very difficult for our family. In our culture women are not allowed to plough as it is a taboo. The older one among my brothers is 12 years old and he is too young to plough. Therefore, my mother was forced to give the land to a man who was able to plough with an agreement that he would give half of the product for us. Though we were having some cereals out of this arrangement life was very difficult. As a result one of my sisters went to Dubai for a domestic work, all of us were very happy by thinking that she would support us financially.*

*I was a grade 6 student at that time; I dropped out of my school and started my process to get to where my sister was working. There were two serious reasons behind my decision to go to Dubai. The first one was the financial need of my family; my mother was suffering a lot to raise such a big family. It was very difficult for her to provide us something to eat. I remember that before my sister went to Dubai, we used to eat 'ye shnibra kolo'<sup>16</sup> because we didn't have anything to eat. The second reason was that if I stayed in our village, I knew that I would be abducted. My elder sister was abducted while she came back from school. She married her abductor and now she has a baby. So, these two reasons forced me to look for the outside world. I told my sister that I would like to work like her. She gave me the telephone number and address of the agent who sent her to Dubai. I came here and contacted the agent. They fulfilled all the criteria and processed my employment and sent me to Dubai.*

*I was very happy of staying far away from my village. I felt secured because I was free from abduction. The agent was the one who covered all the expenses so that I should work and pay back the loan to the agent. I signed an agreement for this. There were also three more domestic workers like me, two of them were Indians (a cook and baby sitter), and one of them was Somali. She was also working as a cleaner. On my first impression I liked Dubai very much because the place was very clean, modern and it was very amazing for me.*

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<sup>16</sup> a crispy cereal that is made of chick pea



*Everything was new for me. I was just like a newly born baby. I had difficulties with language. I didn't speak both English and Arabic. I am Muslim so that I didn't have any problem concerning religion. I stayed for about two months at my first employment, but after that I wasn't in a position to stay any longer.*

*My task was difficult and I was not able to handle it. The lady was always shouting at me at the first and second week of my employment. After that she started to beat me. Such action was very difficult for me. Sometimes she locked me in one room and beat me in a way she liked. I begged her in my own language that is Oromiffa. I knew that she didn't understand what I meant, but I am I tried to speak out what was in my heart, knelt down and kissed her feet. She never let me go unless she became tired. I experienced such things several times within the two months. Finally, I managed to call the agent and went out of that place. I stayed about three days at the agent's place during this time. I had a chance to call my sister and I told her what happened to me and she advised me a lot. She told me that I should be very active in managing to handle my tasks. She also told me that I should learn the language as early as possible.*

*After those three days, the agent assigned me to another employer. By the way, the agent took all my salary for loan repayment. I was employed as a baby sitter. There were twin girls that I was looking after; there were two more domestic workers, a cleaner and a cook. Both of them were from Philippines. I was praying to Allah to let me enter into a better place, this one seemed nice, but I heard that Madame and one of the Philipino domestic workers always quarrelled. I was wondering why they were quarrelling in such a way. I was not able to understand all what they were saying but I got worried each time when I heard their voices.*

*Every Thursday afternoon, Madame visited her mother who was living a bit far away from the place where we were living. I and one of the Philipino(the cleaner) always went with her. We stayed together at her mom's place until Monday and got back to home. I used to go because her twin babies used to go with her. And the other domestic worker was to handle all the cleaning tasks. One day, I saw Madame and her mom praying in a dark room. The prayer was like singing, they sometimes spoke to each other loudly and they stayed in that room for a long period of time. I asked my friend why the two ladies stayed in that praying room for such long period of time. She told me that both of them were witches and they were praising their goddesses. I became stressful of this situation. I started to develop fear but I preferred to keep quiet. However, every week when we went to that place, I was not feeling comfortable. Gradually, the fate of my fellow Philipino fell on me. She started to shout at me out of silly reasons. She started to give me hard time. Such situation stressed me a lot. I felt depressed.*

*I have tried my best to manage such challenging situation and to stay on the track. However her characteristic became very rude. She was treated us like an animals; she insulted us and she was telling us that we don't have anything to eat in our country. She used to keep telling us that our parents would die out of hunger. And she always nagged us that we were few of the luckiest people for being in Dubai and having comfortable life. I can say that all the words that came out of her mouth were nuisance. I used to be annoyed when she insulted especially our parents. I was in deep nostalgia and I didn't want to hear anything that is bad about my family.*

*I remember one Saturday, while we were at her mother's place; she called both of us to her praying room. She asked us to praise her goddesses together with them and both of us refused. She asked each of us the reason behind our refusal, after hesitating for a few minutes I told her that my religion didn't allow me to do so. My response drove her crazy; she shouted at me and said 'does a slave have a religion?' I didn't have any words to explain my feeling at that time. She also warned me that I should do whatever she would ask me to do so long as I was living in her compound. She also emphasized that I should accept her religion as long as I am under her command. She gave both of us a warning that we should present ourselves whenever she went in for prayers in her room. I never forget this incident; the situation is still fresh in my mind.*

*It was on this day that I regretted on the decision that I made to go to Arab countries. When I thought of my mother, sisters and brothers, I always showered myself with tears. What a grief, I asked myself why I made such a decision? I sometimes cry throughout the night. I pray to my Allah to give me an immediate solution. Another weekend was on its way, this time, if I refused what Madame would propose, I knew that she would do something bad. I was frustrated when thinking of such events. All of us didn't have any option than watching what was going to happen. If we tried to report such abuses to the police, they would accuse us of stealing their belongings and put us in prison. My fellow domestic workers told me that they had much more experience than what we were experiencing. They advised me to take everything easy and to be strong.*

*It was on Saturday; as usual we were at Madam's mother's house. I was looking for the kids; my fellow domestic worker was cleaning the compound. They (Madame & her mother) called us to the praying room. There were more guests on that day, it seems like all of them were praying. We were hesitant to enter into the room but we didn't have any choice, both of us knew that things would be worsened if we refused to enter. The other girl looked confident, it seems like she was not afraid of things like I did. They asked us to kneel down because they claimed that they were going to do a prayer for us. We did everything as per their command.*

*They started to sing loudly. I didn't clearly understand the words that they were saying. I didn't know for how long we stayed like that, but I remember that it was for a long period of time. I felt tired, weak and clumsy; it seems like I was not in a condition to hold my head. That is all about I know about that day, when I woke up, I found myself in the bedroom, my body was aching, I had a bad headache, and I don't know for how many days I slept in that room. I found a rope on my legs, I tried to remember what happened on that day but I still don't remember what was happening to us.*

*I tried to stand up, but I was not able to stand up by myself. I was very thirsty; I would like to drink water. After I threw away the rope from my legs I tried to hold all my power and stood up. I went down to the kitchen, no one was around. I drunk plenty of water, after that I tried to look for my friend but I couldn't find her. Madame saw me and asked me what I was doing, I said nothing, I immediately went out of her sight. It was so amazing, that day was Monday, we went back to our home late in the afternoon, and still my friend was not around. When we reached home, I realized that something had happened to my fellow domestic worker. I became afraid of what would happen to me if I stayed until next week. Therefore, I decided to run away, but how? I didn't have my passport with me, but I didn't have any choice. I should at least save my life, one day one of the Pilipino told me that Arabs give injection that kills or put people insane. So what if they could do like that? I didn't want to waste my time. I ran away, went to the agent for the second time. This time, I kindly begged them to send me back to my country, I worked for about nine months, I paid back the lone for the agent, and I knew that I was able to buy my return ticket, I had also received my salaries for two months, I had a two months' salary with them. (my monthly salary was USD 100). It was very difficult for the agent to negotiate with my employer; they refused to give me my passport as well as my salary. After waiting for one week, they gave me my passport and my salary. What a relief! I called my sister and told her everything that happened. I also told her that I had decided to rerun home. She tried to advise me but I told her that I better be healthy than killing myself for some amount of money. She agreed with my decision and I came back here.*

*I went to our village; I was so excited to see my mother, sisters, brothers and all my relatives. That day was one of the few days that I was happy. Strong I am here with my family, I was not feeling secured, especially that I couldn't sleep during the night, the stress that I had in Dubai was still around. I prefer to be alone than being with people. I went out to the forest and stayed there for a long period of time. But each time, I was reminding myself what I had seen throughout my stay in Dubai. I tried to control my mind to stop thinking about those bad days but I couldn't. I prefer to be alone to think about such events. At the end, I became*

*very impatient, rough and wild. This behaviour persists for a long period of time. Such character was very new to my parents; especially for my mom it was distressing.*

*When things became worse, my mother together with my sister took me to the nearby health centre. I got some medical treatment at the health centre and the health centre referred us to the Asala Hospital, I refused to go to the hospital. I was telling them that I didn't have any pain and they did not have to worry about me. I think I can say that sometimes, I was out of my mind. We went to Asala Hospital; again, Asala Hospital gave us a referral letter to Amanuel Mental Specialized Hospital. We came over here, immediately, I was admitted and my mother is here together with me starting from the first day of my treatment.*

#### GSRWDW IV

Summary: The narrator is 18 years old female. She is from Wegedi, a rural village in Wollo. Presently, she is not working. She is the last born for her parents. She has one sister and brother. She never got enrolled to elementary school because of several reasons. She went to Dubai in October 2000 EC. She experienced depression after her arrival from Dubai. She attended psychiatric treatment at Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital after her arrival from Dubai. She is now sheltered at Agar Shelter that is funded by Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Development and Inter Church Commission Refugees and Returnees Affairs.

*I am from a rural village called Wegedi in Wollo (a place in northern part of Ethiopia) . I am the last born in my family, my father passed away right after my birth. We have a portion of land that was inherited from my father. Therefore, my elder brother plough that land and support his family as well as my mother. Since my mother doesn't know the advantage of education, she didn't sent all of us to school. Until I was 15 years old I herded the cattle, sheparding sheep, and looking after goats of my mother and assisted her in such a way. When I became 15 years old, in line with our culture I married in arranged marriage. My husband was about 15 years older than me. I didn't know him and I didn't love him. However, I was not able to violet our culture that has been practiced for a long period of time. My sister also married in such a way and she is now a mother of three children.*

*I stayed with my husband for about one year. After that, it I was not able to stay, it became boring. Due to this, I ran away to my mother's place without the sight of my husband and I started to live with my mother. I had seen that many of the girls in our village went to Arab countries and send money for their parents. I became enthusiastic to be like them, I dreamed of the money that I would send to my mother and modern way of life that I could live in Arab countries. I told my mother all my ambition, she agreed upon my idea and we told my brother to look for sources of money. However, he was not agreeable on what we proposed; he tried to convince me that I would not make any significant change in our family's life. But I refused, and I started to nag him day and night. Finally when he realized that I wouldn't change my mind, he sold two calves and gave me 900 birr to apply for passport. Together with two girls from my village, we came to Addis Ababa, went to the immigration office to process for our passport. At that time I was 16 years old, but I had reported to the immigration office that I was 18 years old. After waiting for one month, all of us got our passports.*

*We found a person who was a relative of one of the two girls who could facilitate our employment (I think he is a broker). Each of us paid 7000 birr for the broker and went back to*



our village. The whole process finalized within two months and all of us went to Dubai. Right after our arrival in Dubai, an agent picked us from the airport. We stayed at the agent's office for two days, and then after I was employed in a family that had 12 children, my monthly salary was 500 dirham (Equivalent to 2000 – 2250 Ethiopian birr). My duties and responsibilities were cleaning the house as well as the compound, washing clothes using the washing machine and ironing clothes. There were also other two domestic workers, one Ethiopian and one Indonesian. The Ethiopian was working as a cook and the Indonesian was also performing general cleaning like me. The first problem that I faced when I started my duty was language problem, I could speak a little of English but I couldn't speak Arabic. This became a big problem for the smooth relationship between me and my employers and my fellow Indonesian domestic worker. The Ethiopian domestic worker helped me a lot in this regard. I worked for three months, the Indonesian domestic worker was not positive towards me, we always fought in using the washing machine, she always insulted me and sometimes beat me. When the owners realized this, they sent me back to the agent. I stayed at the agent's office for one month.

After that, I joined another big family, a family with ten kids. This family was not a well to do family compared to the previous one. I was the only domestic worker, I woke up at 5 o'clock in the morning and go to bed at mid night. I took care of every household chores, cleaning of two big salons (Mejris) eight bed rooms, four bath rooms, washing and ironing all the clothes of the family, cleaning the kitchen and the compound and finally when I completed my daily chores, I was supposed to assist Madame in cooking, if not she would insult me or beat me. Because of the work load I didn't even have time to take my meals, as a result I lost my appetite when I tried to have some food and I experience stomach-ache.

I don't have any words to express the difficulty of the tasks I had; I can say that I was sacrificing my flesh and blood. On top of that Madame used to beat me and insult me each day. Besides, she was not willing to give me my salary. It was very sad that I was not getting my salary; I promised my mother and my brother I would send the money that they spent right after I started my job. Finally I knelt down on her leg and told her that I need to send the money to my parents, I had told her the whole story. I thought that she might be sympathetic, but the response was quiet different, she insulted me a lot. She said that slave doesn't deserve any salary. She also accused me of telling her the rubbish story of my poor family. This incident was very tragic for me; finally I had to call the agent office and reported the situation. After two days, her husband asked me to give him the name and address of a person who is going to receive the money and I gave him, that evening he told me that he would send my salary to my family. When I called my family, they told me that they had built a house using the money that I sent them.

*Even though, I hate the place that I was working for, I convinced myself that I didn't have a better choice. In addition, I adapted Madam's behaviour. She was beating, shouting and insulting me whenever she wished; she could do whatever she liked. I stayed in such a way for one year, still, she was not willing to pay my salary, I seldom requested her, and she was saying that it is better for me if I took it when I went to Ethiopia for vacation. Since I didn't have any choice, I started to wait for the promised day. One amazing thing that I never forgot is, I performed my daily tasks without any help, whatever happened to me, when I think of her abusive character I could anything.*

*It was one Friday, I remember that according to Ethiopian calendar that day was Tikimt 12, only one month was left to see my parents; I was counting each day because I missed my mother, sister and brother very much. Especially, when I thought of all the challenges, difficulties, harassments I faced, I was really crying a lot. That day, I reminded Madame that there is one month ahead of us, I told her to prepare my salary, it was 18 months' salary. She asked me that whether I was interested to get back to her place after my vacation and I affirmed that I would. If I said no I knew that she wouldn't give me any penny. She kept quiet for a while and told me that she would pay me soon. I didn't know what she was thinking. However, innocently, I believed that I would get my salary.*

*It was about 5:30PM, as usual I was very busy throughout the day, I was washing dishes in the kitchen. Madame came into the kitchen, I was not aware that she was there to attack me, she threw me down out of the window. While I was floating in the air, I felt very thirsty, my tongue stuck on my throat, I was thinking that I was dying, that was what I remember about that day. I was not conscious while I fell down on the ground; I don't know exactly for how many days I stayed unconscious, when I woke up I found myself in the hospital. I didn't know that I was alive. I had a severe pain, my body was aching, and the doctors were giving me anti pain now and then. I found my right leg was damaged, and I lost my entire teeth. The doctors told me that police officers found me at the place where I fell down and took me to the hospital. No one knew that she threw me out of the window, and even because there was no eye witness, no one could believe me that she was the one who did it. After the entire police and justice department didn't have any ear for foreigners especially for Ethiopians. Though such terrible thing has happened to me I thank my God for not letting me die.*

*I was admitted at the hospital for three weeks, I had many surgeries for my leg and they put a metal inside my leg. They also put a wire that holds my chin. After three weeks, I was discharged from the hospital; the doctors asked me if I was interested to return back to the place that I was working. I refused to get back to her, at that time; though they didn't clearly*

*understand my pain such question was ridiculous for me. They brought my belongings and passport; they gave me my ticket and sent me to my homeland. Remember that I didn't have any penny in my pocket; no one had for requested my salary on my behalf. When I arrived at Bole, no one was around me; I didn't know anyone and I had nowhere to go. I stayed three nights inside Bole International Airport. On the fourth day, people from Agar Shelter got the information and came to pick me up. They brought me to the shelter; I told them what had happened in my life. They were very helpful, generous and supportive. They provided me everything, bed to sleep, food to eat and above all they gave me love, the thing which I severely missed for the last two and half years etc. I am now getting medical treatment, I have seen a dentist and some of the wires that was implanted to support my chin were withdrawn. Now at least I am able to eat Injera<sup>17</sup>. After I came here, gradually, I think I am getting better. I've got a sponsor who will cover the implantation of my teeth. I have heard that it costs about 30thousand birr. The dentist told me to visit him after one month so that the implantation will be undertaken. My mother, sister and brother didn't know the whole thing that had happened to me. After all these years and life threatening experience I am very excited to see them especially my mother. With the help of God hopefully I will get back to my village after I finalize the medical treatment. And the most important thing that I will do as soon as I reach there is to join an elementary school; I have realized that if I was an educated person, I would never have thought of going to Arab countries and would rather have I stayed in my own village and look for job.*

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<sup>17</sup> Ethiopian traditional food, made up of cereal.

GSRWDW V

Summary: The narrator is a 35 years old woman. She is single. She lost her parents while she was a little girl. She was raised in one of Orphanage centre in Nekemt, western part of Ethiopia. Presently, she is not working. She completed high school. She used to work as a sales person before she went to Kuwait. She went to Kuwait in 2001 and stayed for eight months. She attended psychiatric treatment at Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital after her arrival from Dubai. She is now sheltered at Agar Shelter that is funded by Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Development and Inter Church Commission Refugees and Returnees Affairs.

*I was raised in the orphanage center at Nekemt, after I completed grade 12, I was not able to get my result to enter into the university. It was a very difficult time for me, because, I was suppose to leave the orphanage center after this. Luckily, I found a small job that was in the pharmacy. I started to work as a sales person in the pharmacy. Though the monthly salary that I earned was very small, I managed to survive. However, after working in such a way for a long period of time, I realized that I won't reach anywhere in such very small amount of money. I had heard of Ethiopian women who worked in Arab countries. I started to think about such chances and decided to go to the Middle East countries. However, I didn't have money to cover the expenses for processing the visa and transportation. I had confirmed from one of the agent in Nekemt that the whole process costs 15 thousand birr. I pleaded few of my friends to owe me money by promising them that I will send and pay from my monthly salary. Three of my friends accepted my request and gave me 5 thousand birr each.*

*I started the process and paid half of the payment for the agent, and at the end of the process, after having the ticket and visa I finalised the whole payment. Prior to my departure, I didn't had any information about the country that I intended to go. But I have seen that some Ethiopian women changed their life. After my arrival in Kuwait, a representative of the agent over here took me from the airport. On the next day, he took me to my working place. The place where I used to work was in one of the royal family of Kuwait, the compound is very large; there are 40 individuals who were living in the same compound. There are about ten buildings in the compound. I was assigned to work in one of the building as a baby sitter. There were five kids in that family and all my duties and responsibilities were taking care of the kids. In the compound, we were 12 domestic workers, three of us were Ethiopians, and there were Philipinos, Indonesians, Indians, and Ugandans. My employers were educated people, Madame was a medical doctor and her husband was a pilot. Sometimes she stayed at work until midnight; I would take care of the kids every time. I also washed and ironed clothes of the five kids. I always ran up and down with the kids, my task was very exhaustive*

*because the kids were restless. If something had happened to them, I knew that Madame never excused me. Sometimes my legs swell up because of working for a long period of time.*

*Though she was educated, her attitude for foreigners was not good. She was not treating us properly, specifically; she didn't have a positive attitude towards Ethiopians. She used to tell me that Habeshas are cruel. She always humiliated, maltreated and insulted us. Generally speaking I can say that a dog has a respect in their eyes than Ethiopians or foreigners. They are racist and pessimist towards nations other than Arabs. Since I became aware of her negative attitude towards us, I tried my best to perform all my tasks properly and to be nice to the kids. Despite the fact, her attitude was the same.*

*Wherever, she was monitoring each and every activity at the house using a camera. When I started to work for them the agent told me that my monthly salary was 60 Dinar<sup>18</sup>, at the end of my first month I asked for my salary and Madame was not happy of it, she said that I am in a probation period and should wait for three months to get my salary. Though her reason was not convincing, I accepted what she said and start to wait for the third month. At the end of the third month again I asked for my salary; as I mentioned earlier, I promised my friends to pay pack their money starting from the first month of my employment. I was really frustrated of not sending their money in the last two months. I told my employers that I would like to send all my three month salary which is 180 Dinar to Ethiopia. They said that my monthly salary is 50 Dinar (Equivalent to 2800 – 3000 Ethiopian Birr) and for three months it is 150 Dinar. I was confused of such situations; they said that Ethiopians never got beyond 50 Dinar, so that they told me, my salary is 50 Dinar. If I was Pilipino or Indonesian, Indian they told me that monthly salary ranges from 60-70 Dinars. I was amazed of such type of discrimination however; I didn't have any choice except accepting what they proposed.*

*Three months passed, nothing happened. I started to wait for what they would do, when I asked them they said they will give me at the end of the year. At the end of my eighth month, a tragic event happened. A younger sister of Madam who was living in the same compound had a son who was mentally sick. Another Ethiopian fellow was the one who took care of this boy. She always fed him, changed his clothes and looked after him. His legs were always chained together to prohibit him from running away. A younger sister of Madam who was living in the same compound had a son who was mentally sick. Another Ethiopian domestic worker was the one who took care of this boy. She always fed him, changed his clothes and looked after him. His legs were always chained together to prohibit him from running away. One day the Ethiopian domestic worker entered into his room, fed him as usual, however, she forgot to shut the gate at the terrace. Once again she entered into his room to clean the*

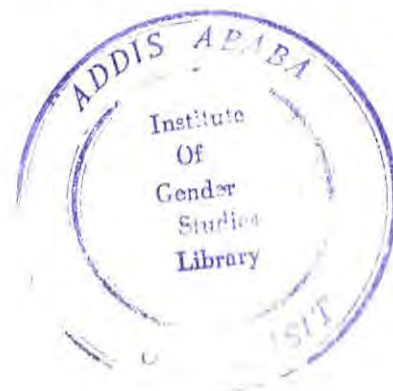
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<sup>18</sup> Local currency of Kuwait

dining table. At this moment the boy pushed her down forcefully, threw her and himself from the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. Both of them died immediately.

The whole family became crazy of this incident, our employers called me and the third Ethiopian domestic worker, and inject us a drug that we don't know. After that I became unconscious. I treated in one of the hospitals in Dubai for four months; out of this I was unconscious for one and half month. According to the doctors at the hospital me and the other Ethiopian domestic worker reported dead and our body was brought by the police. They had put our bodies in the corpse room. My doctor told me that he was trying to examine our bodies, when he gave me an injection, I shouted, he was so surprised because he thought that I was dead. He immediately took my body to Intensive Care Room. I stayed in that room for one and half month until I became conscious. When I woke up, I found myself in the IC room; I had no idea of what happened to me, the only thing that I remember was the day that Madame gave us injection. I asked the doctor what happened to me, he told me that I was poisoned and I was unconscious. Gradually, I became better, my doctor was an Italian guy, he told me the whole story, and the miracle that had happened in my life. I couldn't believe of such incredible thing that God had done to me. I am a Christian and I always prayed to God throughout my stay in Kuwait. This was because I always suspected Madame might do something which can hurt me out of her negative attitude towards Ethiopians. My doctor told me that he was the one who followed all my examinations after he found that I was not dead. Since my blood was poisoned several blood transfusions had been done on me. I was treated in the hospital for four months. I can say that I have fully recovered from the major problems that I had during the past four months; according to my doctor the blood transfusion helped me a lot because my blood was contaminated with the poison.

When I felt that my body was strong, I begged my doctor to assist me, I told him that I have nowhere to go in Kuwait unless he helped me, and if Madame knows that I am alive, she will try to kill me for the second time. I told him the whole story about what happened at my employers place. He felt very sympathetic and promised to provide me with support. I begged him that the only thing that I need was to go back to my homeland. After this, he checked if my passport was available at the police station, he found that my passport was there. He bribed one of the police officers and received my passport. He was doing each and every step with care since my employers were from royal family. They had power to do anything if they are aware that I was alive. Having my passport was a great achievement for me, I was very happy on that day, even though I was not fully recovered health wise, I can say that I was fine.



*But, psychologically, I can say that I was fully depressed. I was very suspicious towards people around me; I imagined that anyone could hurt me or intend to kill me. Wherever I was, each and every action of another person had a negative interpretation for me. I tried to explain this to my doctor; he advised me that I should try to forget what had happened in the past. He also told me that I have been facing mild depression. Though I needed a close follow up and treatment I knew that it was dangerous for me to stay in that country. I begged my doctor to look for ways for me to go out of that country. One morning he gave me a return ticket, he bought it from his pocket. I carried all the medications that I should take for the next three consecutive months. The doctor gave me an instruction to take all the medicines and gave special care of my health. He dropped me at the airport because I had no one by my side. I was really excited of what had happened in my life. I praise God for all his support and I thank my doctor for his indebted help. It was like a dream for me when I reached here at Bole airport, I couldn't believe my eyes after all those hardships, I had never expected that I was able to come back to my motherland. I had nowhere to go, I didn't know anyone who lived in Addis Ababa, and on top of that I didn't had a single penny in my pocket. But I was telling myself that whatever it could be, I am safe in my own country.*

*I resided at Bole airport for one day, on the next day, the present manager of Agar saw me at the airport, she called me and asked me what I was doing in the airport, I told her everything that had happened in my life. I also added that I have friends in Nekemt whom I planned to stay with but I was not able to go to Nekemt because I didn't have money for transportation. She gave me 150 birr from her pocket, she briefed me that she was on the way to open a new project that was a shelter for a woman like me, so that she promised that she would call me as soon as the shelter opened and I can stay there. I gave her my address and telephone number at Nekemt, I also took her number and leave to Nekemt.*

*After two months, the lady called me as promised, I was not yet recovered and I had a bad cough after I got back from Kuwait. As soon as I arrived at the shelter, they took me to the hospital. I had pneumonia, I was treated and took medication for that. I had also a gynaecological complication and I was admitted to the hospital where I had a surgery for that. I also was treated at Amanuel Specialized Mental Hospital and had psychiatrist advice. Thanks to God that I am now in a better condition.*

## **4.2 Findings and Discussion**

This section includes two sub sections; the first section discusses the push and pull factors of migration. Whereas in the second sub section, the main topic or concepts of the study are substantially discussed, analysed and elaborated. The psychosocial and economic experiences of the domestic workers are the major findings of this study. The expectations and the reality that the domestic workers face in the country of destination is the demarcation of this research. The data that were gathered both from the informants of the study as well as the key informants are discussed based on the narrative analysis framework. The experiences of the domestic workers are analysed by substantiating their real life experience with feminist theories.

### **4.2.1 Push and Pull Factors**

The narratives of all of the informants show that all of them share similar push factors. The major push factors mentioned by the informants include absolute poverty and their and their families' ambition to get rid of the poverty.

All informants except GSRWDW I, as well as their families were living below the poverty level. Hence, economic reason or ambition to get /earn better income is the principal objective of the migrant domestic workers. Four of the informants went to the Gulf States to provide sustainable income for their family. One of them explained the condition as follows:

*I went to Dubai in 1993 EC. I was 16 years old, I can say that my parents were very poor. ...I dreamed of the money that I would get out of my employment and what I would have to do to give a better life for my parents..... Since I am from a very poor family, I went to Dubai mainly to make some money and support my family. 'Beteseboche Endiyalfilachew new Dubai yehedkut'. I worked in Dubai for about four years (GSRWDW II).*

Her explanation clearly shows that though they were under 18 years old, the socialization process burdened women to provide unreasonable care for others to deny their own privilege. As a result, they miss formal education that would help them to participate in

activities that enable them to generate income. Due to this, they are not able to take part in the formal sector i.e. they are not able to be employed as professionals in the governmental and nongovernmental organizations as a result of lack of proper educational background. However, they are forced to involve in the informal sector that is working on their own small scale businesses or as a daily labourers etc.

For instance, a report by GTZ (2006) states the only viable option for Ethiopian women to earn an income is through informal work. The reasons vary but are mainly lack of skills, training and access to the formal labour market. Among the five informants of this study only one person graduated from high school. Three of the informants didn't exceed elementary school and the rest one never enrolled in school.

In Ethiopian context, girls' educational attainment is very less. Specifically in rural part of Ethiopia, parents are not willing or interested to send their girl child to school due to harmful traditional practices and different social and cultural practices. Such trend has an overwhelming impact for the advancement of girls and women. Besides, it affirms that educational attainment is closely related to women's better status. It also empowers them to acquire different choices. However, this research reveals that the educational attainment of women migrants who were involved in the domestic labour is very low, so that this is one of the reasons of their unemployment status in the country of their origin.

Accordingly, it also exhibits the gendered nature of labour migration in the third world. Women migrate for the purpose of economic empowerment to themselves as well as their family. This situation is one of the contemporary experiences of Ethiopian women as well as women in the third world. The fact that not only GSRWDW I, but also two of her sisters who went to the Gulf States affirm this premise. Besides, these women migrated to provide domestic labour that is the replica of their socially constructed role. Similarly, GSRWDW II, IV, V stated that they have seen that many girls in their respective neighbourhood migrated to the Gulf States and financially assisted their parents by sending a considerable amount of remittances that changes the lives of their families.

All of the above mentioned points are not the experience of women in western or developed countries. Nonetheless, it affirms the argument of third world feminists, as Mothany, *et al.* (1991) explained the unique experience of women in the third world is bounded by the economic, social and cultural perspectives.

In addition, it also exhibits that poverty has specific nature either on women or men. The feminisation nature of poverty manifests its dimension on domestic labour migrants of Ethiopian women. In most cases, in Ethiopian society girls are socialized and burdened to be responsible in taking care of family members. It is believed that a girl who is above 18 years old and earn some kind of income should support her family members (father, mother, sisters and brothers). It is considered as one of the obligation that women contribute to the society. This situation forced them to provide substantial care for their family.

As a result, as clearly explained in the narrative of each informant of this study, they are migrated significantly to support their family. They also tried their best to resist challenging situations to sustain their work and earn income. This finding is supported by a study of MoFA and MoLSA (2010) that the push factor for 73.3% and 26.7% of women migrants was unemployment and low income of their family respectively. The push factors for the majority of the informants of this study are similar to the above data. The same is true for GSRWDW III. She stated her reason in the following manner;

*There were two serious reasons behind my decision to go to Dubai. The first one was the financial need of my family; my mother was suffering a lot to raise such a big family. It was very difficult for her to provide us something to eat. I remember that before my sister went to Dubai, we used to eat 'ye shnibra kolo'<sup>19</sup> because we didn't have anything to eat. The second reason was that if I stayed in our village, I knew that I would be abducted (GSRWDW III).*

On top of this, different cultural and socio economic conditions exercised in Ethiopian society are also some of the push factors. As few of the informants of this study stated,

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<sup>19</sup> a crispy cereal that is made of chick pea

harmful traditional practices like early marriage and abduction are also among the reasons that push them to opt for migration.

*When I became 15 years old, in line with our culture I married in arranged marriage. My husband was about 15 years older than me. I didn't know him and I didn't love him. However, I was not able to violate our culture that has been practiced for a long period of time (GSRWDW IV).*

The above narrative clearly testifies the major concept behind third world feminists' that is, though the notion of feminism is universal 'sisterhood', the life style and experience of third world women are completely different from western women. The experiences, histories and self-reflections of feminists of colour and third-world feminists remain at a centre of anthology (Mohanty *et al.*, 1991). The push factor of all the informant of this study can witness this concept. Moreover, all the informants of this study asserted that their option was not the correct measure to achieve their objective or target goals.

Similarly, the entire key informants of the study affirmed that the underscored reason of women domestic workers who migrate to the Gulf States is the economic demand of themselves and their family members. KI I underlined:

*I have been treating returnee women domestic workers who experience mental illness for several years. I have come up with common push factors of the majority of these migrant domestic workers. I can say that all of them are sacrificing their life for their parents. They migrate to shoulder the burden of their family in their young age. And they put themselves at the forefront position for the benefit of the people they love (KI I).*

Exceptionally, the push factor of GSRWDW I's evidenced the socially constructed power relation of the two genders. It exhibits how women are restricted from the chance to make any form of decision. Her experience affirmed that mostly women are in a position not to oppose or disagree on what the other gender proposed. This is because of cultural and religious beliefs (culture in the name of religion) of the society; women are socialized to be passive and expected to be agreeable. Such character is encouraged and perceived as a sign of purity or innocence. Such value system is inherited from patriarchy to ensure male domination over women. Therefore, it is possible to say that, this is one form of

perpetuating patriarchy to sustain men dominance and to marginalize women. This can also be one form of exploiting women's unpaid labour or care economy.

Substantially, as GSRWDW I revealed socialization process shaped women to be nurtures as the narrator tried to explain. She was there to satisfy the needs of her fiancé; she never gave a space for her stance or feeling. This is because she was shaped to accept the preference of her fiancé. Besides, in Ethiopian society, as a result of the patriarchal belief, women by any means are expected to marry. Culturally, it is a taboo or not acceptable for a woman to stay unmarried. If a girl/woman failed to marry, it is a social humiliation for her family as well as herself. Due to this reason, getting married has a significant impact on the life of GSRWDW I. Besides, such trend is considered as one of the ways of preserving the respect of that family in the society. The following is what she was thinking about when she faced difficulties during her stay in Dubai:

*I remind myself that I left my place of origin to have some money in my pocket, so that I tried to convince myself that I should pass such challenges to achieve my objective. After all, I promised my fiancé so how could I get back home with empty pocket? (GSRWDW I).*

Even though she sacrificed all that she can do, the narrator was not successful and unable to attain her goal. This was one of the reasons for her mental instability. Accordingly, there are cases where women are forced to migrate as a result of the power relation between men and women. In line with this key informant VI states:

*I have come up with the case of a returnee woman domestic worker who was a mother of five children. She was from the northern part of Ethiopia. She runs away from her village because her husband was trying to kill her every time they quarrelled. She left her young children to her mother by promising that she will send money as soon as she starts work abroad. She just came to Addis Ababa and contacted the agent and went to Kuwait within a month. She had no any prior orientation concerning the country of destination. However, she never communicated her family after she went to Kuwait; she never got her monthly salary and never sent money to her family. Finally, she got back home with mental illness (KI VI).*

The experience of this woman is quite different from the others. Though she is in her own village, she was not in a position to protect herself. The persistent male domination of the system doesn't allow her to enjoy her individual right. Besides, she is not in a position to challenge the coercive power of her husband and opted for migration. Though she migrated, her overall ambition was to provide resources to her children as well as her mother. This situation can evidence the consequence of gender inequality or male dominance not only hindering women's life, but also hampering in the proper development of the new generation.

Generally, the push factors of all domestic workers are economic needs of their parents. On the contrary, the pull factors as stated by the entire domestic workers were better wages that are paid for the domestic work. In other words, as the major push factor is economic reason, wages they intended to earn is the underlined push factor. Besides, the imaginary ambition of the outside world and modern lifestyle in the country of destination is also another pull factor. In relation to this KI V remarks;

*There are infinite numbers of women who are imprisoned in Dubai; they are waiting for their deportation date. At the time of their deportation, the reaction of most of the domestic workers is very harsh. They shout, cry, or try to escape, sometimes people who observe this incident wonders what kind of country that we have. This is because they perceived the reaction of the domestic workers as hating or avoiding their motherland. Ironically, the intension of the domestic workers is to escape from poverty as well as to avoid going home empty-handed. They prefer to stay and wait for what comes next. In this case, what pull them in the country of destination is source of income and the modern way of life (KI V).*

According to the narratives of the entire informants, more or less the push and pull factors are interrelated; most importantly economic needs are the core agenda. The ambition of all domestic migrants is to bring over a considerable change in the life of their parents as well as themselves. Specifically, the success of some domestic workers triggers many more domestic workers' ambition to change the lives of their family.



## **4.2.2 Psychosocial and Economic Experiences**

This section incorporates two sub sections. The first section briefly discusses the psychosocial experiences of GSRWDW. The second section deals with the economic experiences of GSRWDW.

### **4.2.2.1 Psychosocial Experiences**

The psychosocial experience involves both psychological and social aspects or it is relating social conditions to mental health. As a result of different form of environmental pressure, individuals might experience psychological illness; such condition called psychosocial experience. This section deals with the psychosocial experiences of Gulf States returnee domestic workers.

The narrative of the informants is the portrayal of the lived experience of Gulf States returnee domestic workers. The lived experiences of all the narrators uncover the factual psychosocial experience in their respective country of destination. Their situational knowledge can be used as a baseline for the interpretation and discussion of this study. Accordingly, the unrecognized, untouched and hidden experiences are also disclosed. In this regard, feminist standpoint theory is the distinctive and underlined approach that can divulge the situational knowledge or the overall experiences of the domestic workers using their genuine expression. As Cudd and Andreasen (2005) state the ground of knowledge should be the experience of the researched.

All the informants affirmed that they faced mental distress out of different unexpected and unfavoured experiences in the country of destination. Even though the informants' place of work varies, more or less their experience is quite similar. This might be because of similar value system of the country of destination. To begin with the narrative by GSRWDW I illustrated that her employer tried to kill her without her knowledge:

*One day while I was performing my daily chores, the lady came in and switched off the AC without my knowledge. It was a terrible moment. I didn't know that it was switched off. I started losing my breath. I tried to run into another room and after that I lost my conscious. After some hours I found*

*myself on the floor and this incident scared me a lot. I realized that she intended to kill me or avoid me out of her place (GSRWDW I).*

Moreover, another informant faced homicide trial by her employer; the following is the whole scene of the trial:

*It was about 5:30PM as usual I was very busy throughout the day; I was washing dishes in the kitchen. Madame came into the kitchen. I was not aware that she was there to attack me. She threw me down out of the window. While I was floating on the air, I felt very thirsty and my tongue stuck on my throat. I was thinking that I was dying, that was what I remember about that day (GSRWDW III).*

Likewise, there is a similar life threatening incident that was narrated by another informant.

The narratives as follows;

*A younger sister of Madam who was living in the same compound had a son who was mentally sick. Another Ethiopian domestic worker was the one who took care of this boy. She always fed him, changed his clothes and looked after him. His legs were always chained together to prohibit him from running away. One day the Ethiopian domestic worker entered into his room, fed him as usual, however, she forgot to shut the gate at the terrace. Once again she entered into his room to clean the dining table. At this moment the boy pushed her down forcefully, threw her and himself from the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. Both of them died immediately. The whole family became crazy of this incident, our employers called me and the third Ethiopian domestic worker, and inject us a drug that we don't know. After that I became unconscious. I treated in one of the hospitals in Dubai for four months; out of this I was unconscious for one and half month. According to the doctors at the hospital I and the other Ethiopian domestic worker reported dead and our body was brought by the police. They had put our bodies in the corpse room. My doctor told me that he was trying to examine our bodies, when he gave me an injection, I shouted, he was so surprised because he thought that I was dead (GSRWDW V).*

All of the above lived experiences of the three informants can be an instance that portrays the lives of Ethiopian domestic workers in the Gulf States. Therefore, such treatments are some of the causes of mental depression and instability of the domestic workers if they are able to escape from such violent incidents.

In addition, though the range is different limitation of time to have reasonable rest and adequate sleep are other difficulties faced by the domestic workers. In line with this, working for a longer period of time is also a difficulty experienced by all the informants of the study. For instance two of the narrators stated that GSRWDW I, and IV stated *'I used to start my daily chores at 4 o'clock in the morning and work until 1 o'clock in the midnight. I slept only for three hours. I woke up at 5 o'clock in the morning and go to bed at mid night.'* The informants' experience of working for longer period of time can be another variable that escalates depression and mental stress. Besides, as any other human being, appropriate rest and sleeping time are very crucial for the psychological stability.

The points that are described above are some of the problems that are experienced by women domestic workers. In order to clarify the fundamental points of the psychosocial experiences of the domestic workers, three basic issues can be ascertained. The first and prominent one is that domestic work is exposed to discrimination, oppression, and subjugation by its very nature. This is because domestic work is limited to the private arena of the employer. The domestic workers are under the instruction of their employers for 24 hours. They are working and residing in the same compound. Most of the time, their working time is not limited. As mentioned by the domestic workers, they used to work for 17 – 22 hours a day. Besides, like other civil servants, they were not allowed to have rests during weekends.

The second reason behind their discrimination is related to the identity of the domestic workers. In the country of destination, these domestic workers are treated as an outsider or as a second citizen (this aspect is also related to the racial background of the domestic worker). This has direct relation with the cultural and social aspects of the country of destination. In addition, the domestic workers have difficulties to use the language of the country of destination right after their arrival. The third and decisive one is their gender in relation to their class. In any patriarchal society, the issue of equal treatment is doubted for not only women in low status but also for women who are economically strong. This might

be because of the place or the position that is assigned for women is always very less. As a result such trend has a negative impact on the social status of the domestic workers during their stay in the country of destination.

The above three substantial conditions are the root causes of the unfavoured experiences of the domestic workers. This phenomenon is described by the feminist interseccionalist theory in the following manner. McCaan and Kim (2003), women and men throughout the social order experience different forms of privilege and subordination depending on their race, class, gender, religion and sexuality. Accordingly, the experiences of these domestic workers can verify that they are discriminated because of their racial background or the colour of their skin and maltreated because of their class.

On top of everything else, human rights were also violated or unknown in the case of these domestic workers. They were precluded to eat enough amount of food. Besides, their freedom of speech, freedom to have their own religion and freedom of movement were denied. Additionally, their working situations and working hours were not bounded by the standard international labour law. A study by Lalem (2004) shows that the MoLSA model of an overseas employment contract provides maximum of 8 hours/ day and 48 hours/ week, rest days to be designated, overtime pay to be paid.

Humiliation and degradation are the daily experiences of the domestic workers; as a result they develop inferiority and psychological fear. This incident is described by one of the key informants;

*Most of the employers are stone-hearted. They enjoy their superior position. Usually, they are not willing to call the domestic workers using their name. Instead they use words like 'donkey', 'monkey', 'dog', 'slave' etc. Such verbal harassment hammers into the minds of the domestic workers and can't be easily erased. Due to this, the domestic workers can easily develop hatred and identity crisis that gradually exposed them to stress and mental depression together with other physical and verbal abuse (KI 5).*

In addition, some of the informants confirmed that they developed inferiority complex as a result of the treatment of her employers; one of the informants said; *"I can say that a dog has more respect in their eyes than an Ethiopian or foreigners"* (GSRWDW V).

*Finally, I knelt down on her leg and told her that I need to send the money to my parents; I had told her the whole story. I thought that she might be sympathetic, but the response was quite different; she insulted me a lot. She said that slave doesn't deserve any salary. She also accused me of telling her the rubbish story of my poor family. This incident was very tragic for me* (GSRWDW IV).

Such humiliation and maltreatment have a chance to manipulate identity crisis that ends up with mental disorder. The same incident had occurred to the informants of this study. Their ambition prior to their migration was to change their living standard by earning better income however; the situation in the country of destination didn't allow them to achieve their goal.

Generally, concerning the trend of migration one KI remarked that migration is a process that individuals tried to adapt a new value system. This system might be opposite to what they have been socialized. Therefore, migration and mental illness have positive correlation. A person who failed to adapt with the new environment might face mental illness. Even though the new environment is favourable.

*Migration is like a journey in a dark night. A person who migrates should have prior orientation of the cultural and socio economic condition of the country of destination. When we come to domestic workers who migrate to the Gulf States, most of them don't have awareness about the country of destination. Mental illness is related to the biological and genetical formation of human being. Some people by their very nature could be strong to challenge any form difficulties and others might fail to react in the same way because they could be exposed or predisposed to mental illness as a result, quite a number of women experience mental illness* (KI IV).

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that racial, class, and sexual discrimination and oppression are the root causes for mental stress or depression of women domestic workers in the Gulf States. Accordingly, the experiences of all informants can allege the foundation of



third world feminism. The fact that these women migrated as a domestic worker is one of the unique experience of third world women.

Likewise, the maltreatment they face in the country of destination is another experience that is faced by women in the third world country. A study by Mothany, et al (1991) remarks that women's experience is heterogeneous for differentiated groups living in different social settings. Inevitably their experiences, opinions and vantage points are also different. The majority of the domestic workers in the Gulf States are from different developing countries and their experience is based on their socially constructed role or status in the country of destination.

The psychosocial experience of women domestic workers has also direct relation with the process of enculturation. All of the informants of the study confirmed that every time their respective women employers shout at them. Concerning this aspect, one of the key informants described the normative communicative characteristics of Arabs as *"it is normal to shout or speak loudly in Arab countries and/ or Gulf States. They are not able to speak within the standard tone like Ethiopians. In our culture, a person who speaks loudly is perceived as abnormal. However, the opposite is true in the culture of Arabs."* (KI III)

He further added that, the domestic workers can adapt this situation gradually or it might be difficult for them. As a result they could experience stress or depression. Almost all the informants of the study affirmed that they had language difficulties during the first three or four months.

In line with this, KI III affirms *"The first three months are very frustrating for the domestic workers because they are not able to communicate easily. Besides, the culture and way of life of the country of origin and destination are quite different. This situation is more difficult in the case of domestic workers who came from rural part of Ethiopia."* In accordance with this, all informants of the study confirmed that as soon as they started their new task, they had difficulties with the environment and technologically advanced kitchen aid materials etc.

Besides, a key informant stated that the enculturation process in the country of destination is very difficult for Ethiopian domestic workers. Therefore, if they fail to resist this situation they might experience psychosocial problems. One of the key informant states this condition as follows:

*Most of the domestic workers perform their daily chores for a longer period of time that is, from 17 -22 hours under harsh situation. Especially, the weather is very hot, sometimes it goes up to 46°C, and they suppose to wear 'hijab'<sup>20</sup> This condition magnifies situations for Ethiopian domestic workers. I think the frustration starts from this stage. Besides, the majority of them went with some ambitions that is to change the life of their parents. However, most of them might not be in a position to achieve them (KIV).*

Moreover, GSRWDW III explained that the domestic workers were forced to unwillingly respect the rules and regulations of the religion of their masters. This fact is related with the standpoint feminist theory ascertained by Patricia Hill Collins in McCaan and Kim (2003) the oppressed group are expected to know the dominant culture in order to survive in it.

The same experience was faced by the informants of this study. They were not in a position to follow their own religion, because of the power relation between them and their employers. The case of GSRWDW III can evidence this situation. She was forced to worship the Goddesses of her employer; there was no way to refuse or escape from this condition.

*There were more guests on that day; It seems all of them were praying. We were hesitant to enter into the room but we didn't have any choice. Both of us knew that things would be worsened if we refused to enter. The other girl looked confident. It seemed she was not afraid of things like I did. They asked us to kneel down because they claimed that they were going to do a prayer for us. We did everything as per their command. They started to sing loudly. I didn't clearly understand the words that they were saying. I didn't know for how long we stayed like that, but I remember that it was for a long period of time. I felt tired, weak and clumsy; it seemed I was not in a condition to hold my head (GSRWDW III).*

Similarly, according to a key informant, there are many Gulf States returnee patients who experience psychosocial problems. He further explained:

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<sup>20</sup> Religious dress that covers all parts of body and sometimes face.

*The nature and type of their illness is different. Some of the illness include, depression, stress, anxiety disorder etc. There are many psychological stressors that result their illness. These include bankruptcy, battering, sexual harassment, shortage of food, deportation, and sometimes trial of homicide (KI VI).*

The above finding and discussion of the psychosocial experiences described the root causes of mental illnesses of Gulf returnee Ethiopian domestic workers. In relation to this, the root cause for the systematic oppression or subordination of the domestic workers is the patriarchal value system that has a direct relation to the class, racial origin, and gender of the domestic workers.

The narrative of each informant exhibited that most of the time the domestic workers have close contacts with the female employers. This might be because of the division of labour of the country of destination. KI II described the living condition of women in the country of destination as follows:

*Women in most of the Gulf States are not expected to perform activities in the public sphere. As a result, they are confined in the domestic sphere. Their educational status is mostly low. Besides, their interaction with the outside world is very limited. Most of the time their interaction is only with their relatives. Due to this, their knowledge is quite limited. Most of them don't have any exposure about the outside world; it is possible to say that they are totally ignorant of anything outside the domestic sphere (KI II).*

Based on this, it is possible to assert that the social construction of women in the country of destination is characterized by male dominated value system of the society. Women representation in the public sphere can also be absent. Due to this, the government system in the majority of Gulf States is patriarchal system that passed from one generation to another.

In such type of male dominated systems of government, customarily male decedents are preferred to undertake power. So that, patriarchy perpetuate in such a way and place women's position next to men. Women's public interaction as well as involvement in every activity in the public sphere is very limited. Their intellectual ability and educational

attainment is confined with their role in the domestic sphere. Such living condition socialized and shaped the personality of women in the country of destination. Due to this, their social role and contribution may not exceed from child bearing and rearing. This has a huge impact on their interaction with outsiders specifically with their domestic workers. As we can understand from the narrative of each informant none of them had positive attitude towards their women employers. This is because of the brutal treatment they faced throughout their stay in the country of destination.

As stated by Hesse-Biber and Yasir (2004) acts of oppression frequently happen to all women. Women of the lower classes experience these acts more frequently including at the hands of other women. The experience of the domestic worker is also directly linked to the above statement. In each narrative woman over woman oppression is clearly exhibited. This was because of the respective socio-economic status of the oppressor, due to this, the oppressed experience frustration and repression.

Generally speaking, as discussed above the psychosocial experience of Ethiopian domestic workers is directly related to the working environment, culture and value system of the country of destination. Besides, the major reason that pushes the domestic workers to migrate and look for income is better wage. However, the fact that almost all of the informants had not earned their monthly salary has a great impact on their mental wellness. Furthermore, the determinant of migration in the country of origin has also a significant contribution. Altogether, expectations and demands of parents and family members could be the external pressure for the domestic workers so as the unfavourable working situations and denial of wages contributes for their depression as well.

Moreover, as a women and domestic worker, according to the narrative of each of the informants, they faced quite a range of challenges. Problems are directly related to the psychosocial experiences of the domestic workers that are stated on the previous sections. Few others which were not discussed earlier are incorporated below.

As the value system of the country of destination is patriarchal, it is predictable that the place that is given to women domestic workers is very insignificant. Though, it is obvious that the nature of their work, their gender, class and their racial ground exposed the domestic workers to challenging situations. One of the prominent challenges that were faced by almost all the informants of this study was life threatening trials of their employers.

*Madame tried to beat me by throwing anything that is in her hands. Verbal and physical abuse became my daily experience, after that I started to be aggressive. I started to feel insecure; I never slept during the evenings because I was afraid that they might kill me while I slept. My life became full of stress; as a result I couldn't resist staying in such condition (GSRWDW II).*

It is clearly stated that in one way or another, even though the girl didn't figure the reason, her employer tried to avoid the domestic worker. Such types of incidents were faced by the domestic workers. In Ethiopian socialization process, mostly religion has a great place and role. Specifically, in the case of these domestic workers, since they departed from their loved ones as well as far away from their home land, they would like to stick to their religion. However, as we can understand from the narrative of GSRWDW III coercively, she participated in the religious ritual ceremony of her employer.

*I didn't have any words to explain my feeling at that time. She also warned me that I should do whatever she would ask me to do so long as I was living in her compound. She also emphasized that I should accept her religion as long as I am under her command. She gave both of us a warning that we should present ourselves whenever she went to her room for prayers ( GSRWDW III).*

Such types of unbearable challenges were faced by the domestic workers. In relation to this, according to the KI V, most of illegally displaced domestic workers experience serious problems of finding a place to reside. In such conditions, if they are caught by the police, their fate is imprisonment.

Additionally, according the audio record of EOTC/DICAC, the statement given by one domestic worker who worked in Beirut for six years and came back with mental illness is as follows:

*My mother is a single mother. She sales tela<sup>21</sup> and support the whole family. Economically, I can say that we used to live under poverty level. Due to this my mother sold the only gold necklace that she had to cover my expenses to send me to Lebanon. I stayed in Beirut for six years but my employers never paid my salary properly. Due to this, I was really frustrated and was not happy of things. One day I asked permission to go to the church because that day was a holiday of finding of the true cross. They allowed me to go. Unfortunately, on my way back to home, police officers caught me and asked for my passport. I didn't take my passport. The last day that I saw my passport was on the day of my arrival to Beirut. Since I didn't have any identity card the police imprisoned me. I stayed in the underground prison for three months. After three months they deported me. When I reached here, I was mentally and physically sick. I was not able to walk. I had severe back pain due to back fracture; a blood was flowing from my ears. Besides, I had bronchitis and my stomach was swallowed badly. EOTC/DICAC ACD January 6, 2011.*

This experience confirms, even though the country of destination is different denial of salary is common for most of the domestic workers. Besides, it shows the complicated problem the domestic workers face if they are imprisoned. This girl was fully healthy prior to her imprisonment, however, out of the thorny situation that she experienced in the prison she ended up with chronic physical problem.

Additionally, according to the TV show of GPA in November 2007, it was stated that there are about 10, 000 Ethiopians who are working in different positions. Not only the domestic workers but also other Ethiopians are working in unfavourable treatment. The majority of Ethiopians entered to the country and get employed illegally. These conditions make the situation worse to their unfair treatment in the country of destination. Sexual harassment and homicide of Ethiopian domestic workers are their daily experience.

On the other hand, it is very clear that different situations like working environment, the private nature of domestic work and their status as an outsider couldn't enable the domestic worker to take an immediate measure as soon as they face challenging situation. Due to this, it was stated on their narration, they were very tolerant to different violent situations.

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<sup>21</sup> Homemade traditional beverage



Three informants stated that they run away in situations where life treating incidents happened. However, the life treating situation becomes one of the root causes of stress and depression.

*Generally I was not happy and stable. Most of the time I used to have stress. I managed to work like this for about seven months. When the situation became out of my control, I lost my resistance and run away (GSRWDW II).*

Likewise according to the psychiatric professionals, individuals coping strategy is different based on the natural mental strength of a person at the time of tragic incident in one's life.

*When individual's expectation failed, it is natural to be disappointed or sorrowed. However, individual's reaction to his/her failed expectation is quite different. Some people lose hope and commit suicide. Some others might experience mental depression or illness; the rest might be strong enough to simply ignore their failed expectation and manage to look for other options. Therefore, the measure that a human being can take is unpredictable. As a result, people who experience mental illness are those who failed to cope up challenging situation (KI I).*

According to the above statement, each individual informant experience mental illness based on their reaction to failed expectation. Even though some of the informants attempt to overcome the challenging situations, they were not in a position to sustain their welfare. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the attempts that have been made couldn't guarantee their wellness.

Similarly, in the TV show of GPA, made on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2007, individual women domestic workers were given a chance to share their experiences. They all confirmed that the only coping strategy that they could do is running away. Besides, some of them informed that on the trial of sexual harassment they lock themselves in a room or they accompany with the children when they observe the husband's intention of sexual abuse.

However, all these attempts might not be successful because the position of the domestic workers can't guarantee their right. Besides, their position by any means shall not enable them to appeal to any form of harassment.

#### **4.2.2.2 Economic Experiences**

The entire informants of the study explained that their economic experience in the Gulf States was very tragic. The living conditions of their family as well as themselves haven't been improved. GSRWDW I states

*When I sat down and asked myself about the benefit that I gained out of this harsh situation, I was really frustrated, stressed and sometimes depressed. I said like 'ke hagere kemesedede beker men aterefku?' (What was my benefit rather I migrated from my home land?) (GSRWDW I).*

According to her narration, she had an ambition to work and make some money. However, she did not succeed because of several reasons; one of the major reasons was her denial of monthly salary. Besides, all informants affirmed that in one way or another they were denied the right to earn their monthly salary. It is possible to assert that such type of practice is a tool that is set by the oppressor in order to exploit the oppressed (domestic workers).

GSRWDW II, went to Dubai to support her family, she further explains *"I went to Dubai mainly to make some money and support my family. 'Beteseboche Endiyalfilachew new Dubai yehedkut'. I used to send about 75% of my monthly income for my family."* Her experience is a bit different than others; she was earning her salary in the first two years of her employment. However, this situation was not persistent when she changed the country of destination. Due to this, she was not successful as she intended to.

The reason behind such ironic incident is the economic dominance of their employers; that is one of the prudent ways of oppressing and subjugating the domestic worker. On top of everything, the fact that employers were not willing to pay salaries could be directly related to the economic disempowerment of the domestic workers. If the domestic workers were economically strong or earn their salary as per their contractual agreement, they might not be tolerant to the verbal, physical and psychological abuse of their employers. Therefore,

systematically they were forced to be submissive; the employers systematically used coercive power that allows them to exercise power over the domestic worker.

The other important issue that is directly related to the economic status of the domestic workers is denial of equal treatment in the legal system of the country of destination. GSRWDW II further emphasized that *the police and any other legal body don't have any interest to hear about the problem of citizens except Lebanese or Arabs*. Accordingly, in any occasion of denial of salaries, the concerned legal bodies were not responsive to guarantee the rights of the domestic workers.

In addition, GSRWDW III stresses *"we tried to report such abuses to the police; they might accuse us stealing their belongings and put us in prison."* The domestic workers were afraid of reporting abuses or violent actions to the police because they were not trustworthy than their employers. Instead, they might be accused of robbery or some other crimes and this result imprisonment.

On the other hand, one of the key informants underlined that during his stay in Saudi Arabia, he got chances to meet some Ethiopian women domestic workers who run away because of abusive reaction of their employers, sexual harassment or denial of monthly salary. He pointed out the condition in the following manner:

*I can say that the living condition of the majority of Ethiopian domestic workers is very harsh. They face different forms of violence and harassment in the country of destination. They are treated like a slave by their employers. Due to this, most of them face traumatic experience. As a coping mechanism, they prefer to run away. However, this reaction worsens their problem. They immediately involved in commercial sex work. According to the law of the land, commercial sex work is outlawed. If they are caught they will be sentenced stoned to death. Living in such situation is very harsh. They are exposed to many forms of sexual harassments both by their clients as well as by the brokers (Ethiopians) who mediate between them and their clients. Due to this, quite a number of women experience mental illness, depression and psychosocial problem (KI II).*

The brief explanation of KI II described the life of the domestic workers who runs away. The fact that they are involved in activities that is legally banned in the country of destination exposed them to any form of harassment. As a result, their sexual orientation could be changed coercively based on the desire of the so called clients. This results in unwanted pregnancy, infection to HIV/AIDS and other STDs that might be life threatening. Hence, not only the sexual and moral right of the domestic workers but also their reproductive right is violated.

On top of this, according to the law of the country of destination as GSRWDW I affirmed, it is unacceptable for a single woman to be pregnant. This situation is also confirmed by KI II. She says *"If woman became pregnant either because of rape or while she was involved in commercial sex, she must immediately leave the country. Otherwise she shall be sentenced to death."* This incident shows the life threatening difficulties that women domestic workers experience for economic reasons.

Accordingly, racial, class and gender discrimination is the root cause for the unjustified economic experience of Ethiopian domestic workers. As all the informants affirmed, ways of obtaining justice is blocked by the blind racial bigotry. Besides, the patriarchal value system of the society is not only oppressing the domestic workers, but also sentenced them to stoned death for the baby that they forced to carry. Again, this is the result of the intersection of racial, class and gender discrimination. As Crenshaw (1994) emphasizes race, gender, and other identity categories most often constitute vestiges of bias and domination.

The other obnoxious economic experience of Ethiopian domestic workers is the amount of their monthly wage. Even though they perform their duties and responsibilities equal to other domestic workers from another countries, for the reason, that is ruthless, their earning is less than others by USD 40. As GSRWDW V stated, without any tangible reason specifically the monthly salary of Ethiopians is always less than Indians or Filipinos. Accordingly, KI V confirmed that she interviewed about 285 returnee domestic workers; all

of them affirmed that their monthly salary is less than all other domestic workers who came from different countries.

According to the TV show transmitted on Hidar 1999 by Gebeyanu Promotion and Advertisement Agency on the life of Ethiopian domestic workers in Bahrain some of the domestic workers stayed in Bahrain for more than five years. They share the experience of other domestic workers who worked in other gulf state countries. There is a case that one domestic worker was denied her three years salary. Besides, it was also revealed that remittances that sent from domestic workers who work in the Gulf States/Middle East is much more higher than other Ethiopians who reside in any other part of the world.

All of the informants have their own objectives or aims behind their decision to migrate to the Gulf States. Besides, their social role that is related to their biological sex forced them to migrate as a domestic worker. According to MoLSA (2010), in the Gulf States, in addition to the domestic work, there are also different types of job opportunities like driving, gardening, etc. However, women prefer to be recruited as a domestic worker. It might be because they think that domestic work is the easiest they can manage or because they confine themselves in domestic activity.

As critically stated by all narrators, their expectation before they went to the country of destination was completely different. All of them didn't have negative image about the country of destination. All of the informants confirmed that they don't have prior knowledge about the culture, working environment as well as types of work they suppose to handle before their departure from the country of origin. The only thing that they were aware of was that they suppose to take part in private domestic work.

As McCaan and Kim (2003) argue, women and men are differently embedded in locations created by these cross-cutting hierarchies. As a result, women and men throughout the social order experience different forms of privilege and subordination depending on their

race, class, gender and sexuality. In other words intersecting forms of domination produce both oppression and opportunity. Therefore, the fact that these women are opted for domestic work escalates their oppression and subjugation. This could be one of the systematic ways of marginalizing or positioning women aside from opportunities of self development and empowerment.

The entire informants of this study reported that their expectation and what they experience in the Gulf States are incomparable. All of them went with high expectation that they would earn a better income which resolves the economic difficulties of their family as well as themselves.

*I used to see that most of the girls in my neighbourhood went to the Gulf States and make good money. Therefore, I asked my mother to send me to Arab countries. She agreed upon my idea. Therefore, my mother borrowed money and sent me to Dubai, I was so happy because I dreamed of the money that I would get out of my employment and what I would have to do to give a better life for my parents (GSRWDW II).*

Her experience is shared by all other informants of the study. All of them never expected that their plan to empower themselves as well as change their family have failed. All confirmed that prior to their departure their belief was that as long as they are strong in handling all the duties and responsibilities, nothing can stop them from attaining their goal. Even some of them were not able to repay their debts.

All the informants of the study elaborates that similar context on their expectation of working environment would be full of stressful situations. They never imagined or suspected that the people that they work for can harm them till death. Moreover, they never presume that they might work for longer period of time that is about 18hrs/day without any rest. All these high expectations and the reality that they faced in the country of destination contributed a lot for their frustration and unstable condition.

Besides, the cultural difference between the country of origin and the country of destination has a huge contribution in respect to compromising and adapting the new culture. Culture includes are language, way of dressing, food, way of living, interaction with other people and socialization. Such cultural change has a great impact on the daily life of the domestic workers; it is possible to say that such factors contribute for the psychosocial disturbance of the domestic workers.

In line with this, the culture as well as the social construction of the country of destination is quite different from the way the domestic workers socialized. It seems like all the domestic workers didn't consider this situation critically prior to their departure from their country of origin. Therefore, as KI I affirms the fact that these women don't meet their intended expectation it exposed them to mental illness or some other different reactions. KI I confirmed this situation by underlining:

*Migration by itself has its own stressors. A person who experiences migration alienates himself/herself from the adapted environment to the new environment. The new environment might be difficult or supportive to the person who migrates. Expectations of the migrants are direct responses of those new environments; it has a direct relation with mental illness.*

According to the above explanation, the fact that they are not allowed to interact with the outside environment as well as the situation where they can't clearly understood the language of their employers, intensify their solicited attitude towards the cultural practices of the country of destination.

Besides, as per the narrative of each informant, the unfavoured treatment that they experience in the country of destination is totally unexpected prior to their departure. None of them were psychologically ready to easily accommodate the knock-on effect and this results maladjustment and mental depression. They all confirmed to some degrees that they convinced themselves to face all the challenges prior to their departure from the country of origin. However, the overall situation became beyond their expectation.



Accordingly, all of the informants underscored that they regret of their decision of migration. Specifically GSRWDW V expressed her feeling as “*I can say that the decision that I made was a devastating decision in my life, I lost all what I have and above all I lost my health the thing that money can’t buy.*” All other returnee domestic workers share the idea of GSRWDW V. They gained an irreversible life lesson out of their migration. The degree of expectation of women domestic workers is very high as a result of misleading information and high expectation.

*The expectation of women who went to the Gulf States both legally or illegally is very high. Especially women who migrate illegally had wrong perception prior to their departure. They perceived as they could earn huge amount of money as soon as they reached to the country of destination. Due to this, they are over speculated to obtain money and to send it to their family (KI VI).*

Moreover, the findings of this research show that all returnee domestic workers had high anticipation of their life in the country of destination. However, none of them had fulfilled their expectations. To begin with, their demand to fulfil the needs of themselves as well as their family members has not been addressed. As stated earlier, this is because of the systematic exploitation of the domestic workers. GSRWDW II explains this issue in the following manner;

*My life became full of stress; as a result I couldn’t resist staying in such condition so that I run away. However, on my way to the agent’s office, police officers caught me. They asked me to show either an ID card or a passport. I have told them that I did not have it with me. They immediately imprisoned me. After staying for ten days in the prison, they deported me. I came here empty handed. As I told you I worked for about nine years in the Arab countries. But, I didn’t do anything for myself. Of course, I tried to give a better life for my family; however, nothing has been changed.*

The overall expression of the GSRWDW II shows all experience of the informants, nothing different has happened in the life of the rest of the domestic workers. Their flourished hope that they hold with them vanished within a very short period of time. The reason behind is maltreatment, discrimination and oppression.



Similarly, according to KI VI, there are occasions where the domestic workers were caught by the police within a month or two after their arrival in the country of destination. Such incident is distractive and might lead them to social defeat. Substantially he explains:

*Some of the domestic workers went to the country of destination illegally, or those who went legally might run away as a coping strategy to avoid unfavourable working situation. These women don't have any better option. In most cases the best available option is sex work or working as a waitress in different 'Shisha'<sup>22</sup> houses. This one is also a sort of sex work. During my visit to Dubai, I saw many Ethiopian women who involved in such activities. Amazingly, the families of these women don't have any idea of their daughters work.*

The above explanation of the key informant explicitly stated that the expectation of the domestic worker is quite different what they actually face in the country of destination. This also shows that in order to survive they forcefully engaged in commercial sex work.

Besides, if they are unlikely caught by the police, they would be imprisoned for unlimited period of time. In such occasion they will stay in the prison until they are deported to their country of origin.

On the other hand, there are quite a number of cases that the domestic workers experience depression and stress after they rejoined their family. Specifically, such condition is widely observed on domestic workers who came back home unexpectedly and deported. The following is what is observed by KI II:

*Even though they are earning their salary in very harsh condition, those who managed to get their salary send it to their parents as soon as possible. They did this in consideration with a portion of the money can be saved. As a result, when they are deported, some of them might think of returning back after having some rest or others who are tired out prefer to look for another option like having small scale business that generates income. However there are high possibilities that they might not really get the amount of money they expected when they came here. I have seen an incident that one girl sent 40, 000 birr within three years and only get 200 birr when she came back home. The girl has been through stressful condition due to her*

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<sup>22</sup> An addictive shredded leaves for smoking (herbal)

*disappointment and went back to Dubai because she didn't have better option (KI II).*

Generally, the experiences and life styles of Ethiopian women domestic workers have been discussed thoroughly based on their own stance and stand point. The finding and the discussion of this study revealed that the first and foremost objective of the domestic workers is to support their family financially and their second ambition is to fulfil their economic needs. However, according to the finding of this research, what they have intended prior to their departure and what they have gone through in the country of destination are quite paradoxical. Due to this, the failure of their expectation results in frustration which finally leads to mental distress.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study has tried to explore the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian domestic workers. In the context of developing countries and specifically in Ethiopian context, like the trend of feminisation of poverty, migration has a gendered dimension. The finding of this study can confirm that migration affects men and women differently. This is because of different social, cultural, religious and economic conditions that are directly related to gender issues. Even though much attention has not been given, in recent days, alike other gender issues, the gendered nature of labour migration is becoming one of the critical gender issues.

Due to this, the gendered dimension of labour migration and its psychosocial and economic implications on the lives of Ethiopian women domestic workers have been covered by this study. The situational knowledge and voices of young Ethiopian women are incorporated to give a room for their standpoint. Hence, the principal objective of this research was to explore, disclose and delve the psychosocial and economic experiences of Gulf States returnee Ethiopian domestic workers.

In recent years the number of women who migrate to the Gulf States in search of employment is raising up. The economic demand of their family as well as the domestic workers is the underlined causes of migrations. Implicitly, cultural and social implications that exposed women to undertake domestic labour work are the existential customary practices. Similarly, the socialization process which emanates out of the patriarchal system value plays an important role in convincing that women are always care givers. Due to this, girls are expected to resolve the financial needs of their parents by finding ways of earning income through domestic work.

Most importantly the push factors behind the migration of the domestic workers are economic demands. The majority of migrant domestic workers are from the lower class family that are not able to provide subsistent needs. Due to this, financial scarcity in their respective family forced them to look for better options. In this regard, the main aim of the domestic workers is fulfilling the financial needs of their family. Hence, the feminisation of poverty is visible in a way that the domestic workers are involved in the informal sector as a result of low or none educational attainment. Besides, harmful traditional practices and the persistent nature of dominance of male in the society are among the major push factors.

Besides, the major pull factor in the country of destination is better wages that are paid for the domestic work. In addition, modernized way of life and technological advancement of the country of destination are the push factors that are identified by this study.

Due to this, as the number of migrant domestic workers increases the number of women domestic workers who experience mental depression or stress is becoming very high. According to the finding of this study maltreatment, working for a longer period of time, discrimination based on race, class and gender, denial of human rights and violence are some of the root cause of the psychosocial problems.

On top of that, the finding of this study exhibited that Ethiopian women domestic workers pass through life threatening traumatic experiences that exposed them to develop depression, stress and mental illness. As the study tried to delve factual evidences from the researched, the narrative of each informant documented the lived experiences of the domestic workers. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that their lived experience is one of the social defeat that squander Ethiopian women domestic workers.

Obviously, the private nature of the domestic work endangers women domestic workers in terms of different aspects. They couldn't be in a secured position throughout their stay in the country of destination. In line with this, according to the findings of this study the majority of women domestic workers don't have prior orientation and awareness concerning the social and cultural values of the country of destination. Such phenomenon

has a significant impact on the social interaction of the domestic workers and on their trial of grasping the new cultural and social values. Accordingly, these values are one of the root causes of the psychosocial experiences of Ethiopian women domestic workers.

Additionally, each individual narrative the power relation between the oppressor and the oppressed is entirely visible. The social status of the domestic workers is the significant aspect that instigates violation of all forms of human rights. Accordingly, in order to sustain their power over the domestic workers, employers often refuse to pay monthly salaries. Such treatment is common that the domestic workers undergone throughout their stay in the country of destination. Hence, such economic bankruptcy and devastation exposed the domestic workers to depression and mental illness.

Apart from this, the principal aim of the domestic workers is to provide financial assistance to their family; secondly they have an ambition to strengthen their economic capacity. However, their expectation prior to their departure from the country of origin changes differs from the reality that they face in the country of destination. Due to this, they encountered difficulties to accept the reality, and this results the feeling of fruitlessness and hopelessness.

Generally, the finding of his study critically delved in to the Ethiopian context of the gendered nature of labour migration. The practice is not only exploiting women's ability but also scarifying their life. However, still there are thousands of women who are migrating in the same pattern and direction. Due to this, massive actions and interventions should be done both by the private and public sectors as well as NGOs.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

The finding of this research revealed that gender issues are not only women's issues but they are also societal issues. Therefore, indispensable attention and measure should be taken. The first and foremost intervention should start from integrating women in all development activities. The important key that could open doors for empowering women is education. Therefore, primary education of women in rural as well as urban areas of the country is the basic and compulsory method that builds the capacity of girls/women. This enables girls/women to participate in the public sphere. In a way, women's confinement in the domestic sphere will become gradually limited. And also such action will scale down the number of women domestic workers.

In relation to this, governmental and nongovernmental organizations should work in bottom up approach by incorporating community and religious leaders to create awareness on harmful traditional practices and other customary practices that sustain male dominance and marginalize women. Besides, orientation on the socialization process of the two gender should also be given. Parents, the community, as well as government should provide equal opportunity for both sexes. Facilitating equal opportunities of access and control over resources empower women to be economically self sufficient. In this regard, electronic and print media can play an important role by addressing the importance of girls' education and the negative impacts of HTPs to the heterogeneous group.

Accordingly, awareness creation and orientation on the customs, values and socio-economic aspects of the country of destination should be given to women domestic workers prior to their departure from the country of origin. The orientation should incorporate family members of the migrant domestic workers; this is because, in some instances, family members are the one who encourages the domestic workers. Therefore, there should also have the knowledge about situation of the country of destination.

As the degree of women domestic workers human rights violation is becoming dreadful, the concerned government ministry office, that is the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs,

should give an urgent attention in proposing the formulation and ratification of foreign employment policy. The policy should incorporate a system which monitors and limits the involvement of illegal human traffickers. Moreover, the policy should also guarantee citizens right in terms of performing their activity properly, earning their salaries and the right to work in a given period of time in the country of destination.

Besides, skill and language training should be given for women who intend to involve in foreign domestic work prior to their departure. This facilitates them to provide skilful services during their stay in the country of destination.

According to the knowledge of the researcher, this area is under researched; therefore, further research on Gulf States domestic workers and human trafficking is very essential to resolve the existing social crisis. Accordingly, different professional groups that advocate gender equality should provide voluntary services for GSRWDW who experience psychosocial problems and victims of different forms of abuse.

On the other hand, both governmental and nongovernmental organization should integrate gender budget in their annual budget plan and programmes. This facilitates different small scale projects and skill development trainings for unemployed women. This enables girls/women to come up with new entrepreneurship activities and small scale business that generates income indigenously.

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Note: Ethiopian authors are used herewith their first given names in line with the Ethiopian academic tradition.

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## Appendix I

### Introductory Questions

1. Would you please tell me your name, age and marital status?
2. Tell me about the size of your family (Sisters, brother etc)
3. What is your educational status?
4. Are you from Addis Ababa or outside of Addis Ababa?

### Major interview Questions

1. Why did you choose to work in the Gulf States?
2. What was your employment status before you migrated to the Gulf States?
3. What was the major reason for you to go to the Gulf state?
4. When did you go to the Gulf State?
5. Who covered the expenses of your travel and employment?
6. In which country have you started to work as a domestic worker?
7. Have you stayed in the same country until you returned back home or went to another country?
8. How long have you stayed in that specific country?
9. Were you working in the same household until you returned back home?
10. If yes, how do you find the overall situation of your stay and your activities?
11. If no, how many times you change your working place? Your reason to change the place? And how would you find another job? (Who helped you to find another job?)
12. Who facilitated the process of your employment? (Agency/Broker)
13. What was the general working environment during your stay as a domestic worker?
14. What were your expectations before you went to the Gulf States?
15. How do you find working as a domestic worker in the Gulf States?
16. Have you find your expectation in real life during your stay as a domestic worker?
17. What challenges have you face as a woman and as a domestic worker?
18. What coping strategies have you used to overcome the challenge?
19. Have you got any background information concerning the destination country and working condition from any governmental and nongovernmental institutions or individuals?
20. Generally, how do you explain life in the Gulf state as a domestic worker?



## Appendix II

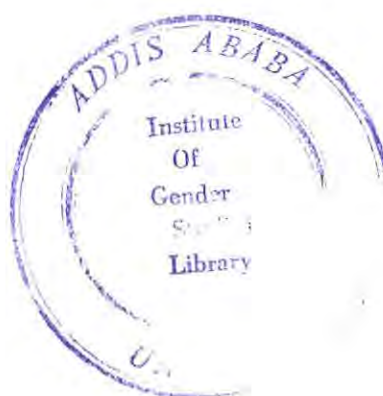
### Key Informants Interview Question (For Medical Professionals)

#### Introductory Questions

1. Would you please tell me your name, and your profession?
2. How long have you work as a (Psychiatrist, Nurse, Health Attendant, Project Coordinator etc)

#### Major interview Questions

1. What are the major mental health problems of patients who returned from the Gulf States? (Sever, easily treated or mild)
2. What is the degree of patients who returned from the Gulf States?
3. How often did patients who returned from the Gulf States?
4. Professionally, is it possible to identify the reason behind mental disorder of Gulf States returnee domestic workers?
5. Based on your psychiatric assessment what are the major causes of mental distress of the migrant domestic workers?
6. Based on the information that you have got from the patients what are the push and pull factors that force the women to migrate to the Gulf States?
7. Based on the information that you have got from the patients what are the major challenges of the domestic workers?
8. Based on the information that you have got from the patients what are their coping strategies?
9. Is mental health hereditary? Did the domestic workers or their family members have the history of mental illness?
10. How do you describe the relation between maladjustment, unfulfilled expectation and unfavorable working environment with individual's mental stability?



## **Dedication**

**I would like to dedicate this paper to all migrant Ethiopian women domestic workers who lost their lives and became physically as well as psychologically impaired due to violent acts against them.**

## Appendix III

Key Informant Interview Questions (For individuals and NGO representatives who work in migration)

### Introductory Questions

1. Would you please tell me your name, and your profession?
2. In what capacity are you working in the institution?
3. How long have you worked in activities that are related to migration?

### Major Interview Questions

1. What kind of assistance/services or provisions that your institution is providing for women domestic workers?
2. What is the role of your institution in providing information for the domestic workers prior to their departure from the country of destination?
3. Based on the information that you acquired from returnee women domestic workers, what are their experiences in the country of destination?
4. According to the returnee domestic workers, what are their reasons behind their migration as a domestic worker?
5. Based on the information that you have got from returnee women domestic workers what are the major challenges of the domestic workers?
6. Based on the information that you have got from returnee women domestic workers what are their coping strategies?
7. Do you think that the domestic workers achieved their intended goals that they aimed before they depart from the country of origin?
8. Generally, how do you explain their overall experience as a domestic worker?