

DENIAL OF RIGHTS, HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND
VIOLENCE AGAINST DOMESTIC WORKERS IN SOME
SELECTED AREAS OF ADDIS ABABA

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Ato. Tesfaye G/medhin, who
(even tough he does not show it) has always believed in me.

List of Tables

| | Pages |
|--|--------------|
| Table 4.1: Age Distribution of the Study Population..... | p. 56 |
| Table 4.2: Level of Education..... | p. 57 |
| Table 4.3: Place of Birth..... | p. 58 |
| Table 4.4: Causes for being engaged in Domestic Service.... | p. 59 |
| Table 4.5: Duration of Activity..... | p. 60 |
| Table 4.6: Marital Status..... | p. 60 |
| Table 4.7: Monthly Salary..... | p. 61 |

Acronyms

| | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| ACHPR | - | African Charter on Human and People's Rights |
| AIDS | - | Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome |
| CEDAW | - | Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women |
| HIV | - | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| HTPs | - | Harmful Traditional Practices |
| ICCPR | - | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights |
| ICESCR | - | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights |
| ILO | - | International Labour Organization |
| MOH | - | Ministry of Health |
| UDHR | - | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| WHO | - | World Health Organization |
| SNNP | - | Southern Nations Nationalities and People |

Abstract

This research focuses mainly on women domestic workers in Addis Ababa. It examines the situation of these women in terms of their social, cultural and legal status in the country and explores their situation in the context of the women's lives. It is mainly concerned with the type of violence that domestic workers undergo in their daily lives as well as the type of legal protections that they are awarded with both in labour and human rights legislations. It also investigates these women's living conditions in terms of lodgings and accommodations; working hours; amount of remuneration; access to information about sexual and reproductive rights; and their access to privacy.

The approach used for this research is mainly a qualitative one which is suitable for the issue at hand. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in the research. Interview and discussion guides were prepared to facilitate the undertaking of the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In addition, a daily activity log was also taken from the participants in order to determine their working hours in a given day. From the data that was collected through these means, the research described the experiences of domestic workers and demonstrates the nature and scale of exploitation and abuses that these women encounter in their line of work. Participants were drawn from three different sub-cities in Addis Ababa, both in households and broker stands.

It was uncovered through the undertaking of this research that women domestic workers are among the most underprivileged groups of women both socially and economically. Accordingly, the participants both in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions reported that they were dissatisfied with their current situations. All of them have been victims of either physical, sexual or verbal forms of harassments during their time of working as a domestic worker. Furthermore, they were not afforded any form of labour protection that are extended to other forms of workers and they were also prone to some human rights violations due to the nature of their work.

The activity of domestic service was found to be predominately comprised of young women who have migrated from the countryside in search of better opportunities. However, in reality these women became immersed in this line of work as a result of lack of other prospects making them susceptible to various forms of abuses and exploitation. That is, in addition to the various forms of violence they face in their daily lives, these workers are merely regarded as subjects of their employers with no rights of their own. Their remuneration does not amount to the workload that they are normally assigned since they are not awarded legal protections in that respect. Furthermore, they are not covered under labour law legislations that can offer protection of their fundamental rights in line of their work, they are not afforded regular working hours, leave periods, or day-offs. In addition to this, as a result of being confined in their employer's households, they face restrictions on some of their human right entitlements. This was mainly found to be due to the invisible nature of the work that confines them to the private sphere where they are under the strict supervision of their employers as well as their economic dependence on their respective employers.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic work can be defined as the housework undertaken by a person who is not a member of the family, to facilitate the running of domestic life and personal needs (ILO 2000). It is the employment of hired workers by private households for the performance of tasks such as housecleaning, cooking, child care, gardening and other personal service. Persons who are engaged in this line of work are referred to as domestic workers or in some societies like Ethiopia, as domestic servants. Apart from certain exceptional circumstances, domestic work is often performed by females and increasingly migrant women around the globe.

Recently, the need to know more about women's work has been recognized by policy makers and development practitioners in all parts of the world. The total amount of subsistence work done by women is not recorded in most studies of the labour force or in "man power" studies and planning (Rogers 1980). That is, although women's work is a major contribution to the general economic status of a certain country, their work are often neglected and not accorded any credit.

When examined thoroughly, women's work is an endless task mainly because it is not something that can be finished in time. This is enforced by the saying:

"A woman's work is never done."

which means that women often face double burdens as "workers" in the strict sense of the word. In talking of the division of labour between women and men in different societies we are talking almost exclusively of gender roles rather than sex roles, determined by culture rather than biology (ibid.). Therefore, if women want to engage in the public sphere, the work in the private sphere being designated to them by the sexual division of labour, will await them.

When we come to the issue of domestic work in Ethiopia, it is one of the jobs that poor rural and urban women engage in to support themselves and their families. Domestic workers or domestic servants are found almost in every middle and upper class households in the Ethiopian society. Even though the majority of them are women who have migrated to the urban areas from the rural parts of the country; there are also some women from urban areas who tend to resort to this line of work as a result of being poor and unable to support themselves or their families.

Just as all other forms of work have been transformed by the advance of capitalism, so has the organization and structure of household employment (Statham, Miller and Mauksch 1988). The most significant change in this line of work has been the shift from live-in service to day worker (*ibid.*). However, when we come to the Ethiopian context, live-in basis is the most preferred form of employment by both employers and domestic servants since the employers want their domestic workers to be on call any time of the day and the workers favor this situation so as to get food and shelter at their place of work.

The most striking and linked features of domestic work are its pre-industrial character and its degraded status. (Statham, Miller and Mauksch 1998) That is, as long as the work takes place in the household it remains economically invisible. And in a society based on market economy, work that is categorized as pre-industrial and which produces no exchange value is often devalued. Thus, even though domestic work is mostly the only means of support for a vast number of women; it is often devalued and accompanied with low social status mainly because it is undertaken in the private sphere rather than the public.

Domestic work can be done full-time on either a residential or non-residential basis, part-time or per hour. In principle, pay and social benefits such as pension contributions, maternity and sick leave, weekly rest and paid holidays have to be granted in accordance with the national laws (Ramirez-Machado 2003). The remuneration must be proportional to the quantity and quality of work, and can be paid monthly, weekly or daily; pay for migrant workers must be the same as for local workers (*ibid.*). However, this international standard is rarely complied with in many countries around the globe.

When we come to the case of Ethiopia, the services that domestic workers render in and around the house include cleaning the house; cooking meals; looking after children; washing clothes and utensils; making beds; baking *Injera*^{*}; preparing food materials like Berbere[†], Shiro[‡], etc.... The majority of them prefer to reside with their employers which subjects them to be on call 24 hours a day. Domestic workers receive a monthly or an annual salary usually in cash. There may also be instances where they get paid in kind in the form of clothing or other materials. Their wages are usually fixed through bargaining at the inception of their employment since there is no formally accepted minimum wage for domestic servants.

Under international law, all workers are entitled to core labour rights which include the right to wage which provides them with an adequate standard of living, reasonable limitation of working hours, the right to rest, the right to holiday, and the right to form a trade union (ICESCR 1976, Art. 7&8). However, Ethiopian domestic workers are denied these rights and their conditions often depend on the goodwill or otherwise of their employers. Thus, given its social, economic and legal invisibility accompanied with low social status, domestic work tends to be abusive and exploitative for women who are engaged in it (Ramirez-Machado 2003). As a result of this, most workers are vulnerable to numerous forms of violence and abuse which often lead to tragic consequences.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Domestic workers are a necessity as well as the norm in a typical Ethiopian family. Their presence in a certain household makes it possible for women who employ their services to get out and participate in the public world. That is, these women can get employed in productive roles having relegated their reproductive roles around the house to the domestic workers.

However, domestic workers face various forms of problems in relation to the social, economic and legal status that is accorded to them. To name a few, these workers are prone to long hours of work; heavy workload; low salaries; lack of privacy; job insecurity;

^{*}The staple food of Ethiopians made from *teff* which is an indigenous Ethiopian grain.

[†] A spice used for making *wott* which is a form of goulash made from different substances.

[‡] Another ingredient for making *wott* made from grounded peas.

exclusion from health schemes and cash benefits or protection against dismissal in case of maternity; lack of control by the labour authorities with respect to labour inspection and law enforcement; weak collective bargaining position and a high level of control by the employer (Ramirez-Machado 2003). In addition to this, resident domestic workers face problems of isolation, difficulty in organizing, a regimented lifestyle, poor living quarters, insufficient food, and lack of privacy (ILO 2000).

All of these problems make these women vulnerable to numerous forms of oppressions. That is, first of all, the work they are expected to perform and the kind of remuneration that they are awarded is not proportional. The work itself is very tiresome, really hard and it still remains a physically demanding occupation. Domestic workers often retain employment through relatives or brokers; and therefore are not in a position to negotiate their terms of occupations like other employees. In addition to this, the “laws” on how one household is run differs from another and the domestic worker is supposed to conform to these rules if she accepted the offer propositioned to her.

In the family that they live with, the domestic workers might be awarded either good or bad treatment from their employers (Motesi 1990). But in most cases, they are victims of multiple oppressions. It is a generally observed phenomenon that domestic work is often regarded as a demeaning and humiliating line of work in most societies including Ethiopia. As a result of this, domestic workers are often considered as inferior subjects by their employers and their families. Thus, they face physical, sexual and verbal abuse from their employers in their daily lives. They are also excluded from the ambit of labor legislations which give protection for workers in general as a result of the lack of recognition for the line of work that they are engaged in. In addition to these, they also face denial of some basic human rights due to the nature of their work which makes them susceptible to isolation and under the command of their respective employers.

Even though it is a well-known fact that most of the domestic workers in the Ethiopian society do not have access to fair treatment; their social as well as legal status in the society has remained almost invisible to policy makers, development practitioners and social science

researchers. By examining the forms of exploitation and abuse that domestic workers face in light of the violence they are exposed to, the remuneration they get, the legal protection that is extended to them, the kind of lifestyle they lead and the problems they face; this research aims at making domestic workers more visible to policy makers and development practitioners so that these workers can get the appropriate credit and legal protection for the work that they are performing.

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

As a general objective, this research attempts to shed light on the situation of domestic workers and the kind of treatments that they are awarded by the Ethiopian society and the forms of violence they are exposed to in general.

On the other hand, in terms of specific objectives this research will strive to:

- Examine the social and economic problems of female domestic workers;
- Examine the forms of violence as well as the social and economic abuses that domestic workers undergo;
- Examine the existing laws of the country in light of the protection they extend to domestic workers;
- Examine the status of female domestic workers in Ethiopia in relation to the international labour standard;
- Draw the attention of social science researchers in general, towards the study of the life of domestic workers.

1.4. JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH

The context of isolation that domestic workers live in, together with their social and economic status, makes them highly vulnerable to a range of abuses including physical, sexual and psychological violence. They may be subjected to physical violence such as beating and assault by their employers as a result of minor mistakes that they make in their line of work or be exposed to sexual harassment ranging from unwanted physical contact to rape from their male employers. These kinds of harassments may often result in their being

pregnant and having to give birth out of wedlock. As a result, they find it difficult to support their children and themselves since in most cases their employers will throw them out of their houses.

On the other hand, domestic workers have no social dignity or respect in the society (Motesi 1990). In the Ethiopian society also, domestic workers are degraded and are usually addressed by humiliating words such as '*Gered*'[§]. Since they are often regarded as subjects of their employers, they are prone to maltreatment and verbal assaults. That is, they are constantly nagged and patronized about their work and how they are supposed to do it.

Furthermore, these women are not provided with the necessary and favorable working conditions (Messele 1985 E.C). Most of the domestic workers in Ethiopia work for long hours in a given day. They are supposed to get up early in the morning and go to sleep late at night. However, even though these workers may be on call twenty four hours a day they are not entitled to adequate compensation, leave, rest/leisure time etc... which is available for other types of workers. They also suffer from lack of privacy and interference in personal matters as a result of the nature of the work which consists of long hours and a close supervision by employers.

Furthermore, they have no regular hours of work which makes their working hours unlimited and susceptible to being on call twenty four hours a day. And in most cases they are only supposed to get a day's leave for a full month's work and service. In addition to this, these workers might have their wages withheld by their employers without their consent for various reasons. These kinds of treatment will psychologically affect these women and consequently will lead them to develop an inferiority complex which will affirm their belief that they are indeed inferior and unable to do anything to better themselves.

Hence, due to being subjected to heavy workload; lack of fair remuneration; unpleasant treatment; physical and sexual violence; unfavorable working conditions; and verbal assaults, women domestic workers can be categorized as a group of women who are in the most

[§] An Amharic word denoting the degraded status of domestic workers.

oppressive situation in the Ethiopian society. Thus, examining their situation will be useful since they're a group of women whose position has been and still remains to be invisible.

1.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This research is based on women's experiences as domestic workers in a particular setting i.e. in the city of Addis Ababa. Thus, it does not include the experiences of all women domestic workers in the country since the number of participants is very small in number. Nevertheless, as it has been mentioned earlier on, since most of the domestic workers who are employed in Addis Ababa are from the countryside of Ethiopia, the research will hopefully provide an insight into how these women experience the line of domestic work through the examination of their living conditions, the forms of violence they undergo and the type of rights that they are awarded.

1.6 DEFINITION OF RELEVANT TERMS

This research is mainly concerned with the experiences that domestic workers encounter in their daily lives. To this end, it employs the following terms or concepts which will constantly be used in the coming chapters. Thus, to avoid any confusion or overlapping their meanings and understanding for the purpose of the research at hand has been enumerated as follows:

1.6.1. Domestic Worker

Although there is no standard of a domestic worker, definitions in legislation throughout the world seem to agree that domestic service requires the following components: the workplace is a private home; the work performed has to do with servicing the household; the work is carried out on behalf of the direct employer, the householder; the domestic worker is directly under the householder's authority; the work performed must be done on a regular basis and in a continuous manner; and the employer shall not derive any pecuniary gain from the activity done by the domestic worker (Ramirez-Machado 2003).

Thus, for the purpose of this research, the term domestic worker is used for those women workers who are employed in private households or are in the process of looking for work in

households to render specified services such as cooking, washing, cleaning or taking care of children on a live-in basis.

1.6.2. Violence

Violence is conceptualized in terms of what both women and men face in specific forms: oppression, domination, threats, denigration and humiliation (Oyekanmi 2000). For the purpose of this research, this term is used to denote the violence exhibited against women. Thus, violence against women is a concept that is manifested through acts, activities, and process accompanying the use of subtle or overt force, domination, exploitation and sexuality (ibid.).

Violence against women is a phenomenon which has recently gained recognition in terms of its being an impediment to attainment of equality, development and peace. It is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life” (United Nations 1993, Art.1)

Accordingly, for the purpose of this research, the term ‘violence’ is going to be used for any action inflicted on women domestic workers either physically, sexually or even verbally; with the intention of causing them harm or suffering.

1.6.3. Sexual Division of Labour

Sexual division of labour refers to the delineation and distribution of tasks involved in the production of goods and services among men and women on the basis of their biological sex. The term ‘sexual division of labour’ is useful because it encompasses within the same framework both paid work in the labour market and the unpaid, non-marketed family production and caring tasks to which women are recruited through marriage and motherhood (Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz 1997).

1.6.4. Worker's Rights

The use of the term 'worker's rights' in this research is used to signify the legal protection extended to all workers in safeguarding their overall working environment. These rights are extended in the form of stipulations for specific conditions such as: contractual agreements between employers and employees; conditions of work in terms of working hours, leave periods, and the setting of a standard minimum wage; provision of appropriate lodgings and accommodations which are favorable to the working environment; protection against arbitrary termination of employment etc...

1.6.5. Human Rights

The idea of human rights descended from the philosophical idea of *natural rights* that are provided by God and applicable for all humans. Therefore, human rights are rights which are accorded to every person in this planet on the simple basis of just being human beings. In general, the term refers to the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled to. These rights are often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, equality before the law among others. The UN Charter which is placed at the pinnacle of the human rights system has given rise to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Steiner and Alston 1996). Also a host of multilateral human rights treaties usually termed as conventions, as well as resolutions or declarations have been ratified by many states to further develop these covenants which include the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

CHAPTER TWO

2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Feminist theories touch upon diverse issues and disciplines. One of their key commitments is to place women at the center and to identify patriarchy as the key structure for understanding experience (Marshall and Rossman 2006). Feminist perspectives often uncover various modes of women's oppression by naming and valuing women's subjective experience in their researches. Feminist methodology is distinctive in particular political positioning of theory, epistemology and ethics that enables the feminist researcher to question existing 'truths' and explore relations between knowledge and power (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002).

Feminist research bases its thinking on the fact that women have been excluded from the process of the making of knowledge. It argues that traditional social science has begun its analyses only in men's experiences by asking only the questions about social life that appears problematic from within the social experiences that are characteristics for men (Harding 1987).

In addition to this, it stresses the fact that the traditional research method has considered women as the objects rather than the main source of knowledge that is being researched upon (Mason 2002). It has been a big and ongoing debate that the traditional research methods undertaken in the past have been formulated by males. As a result of this formulation, feminist research methods have been found to be very much reflective of the patriarchal rule and also major contributors for its sustenance.

With this idea in mind feminist researchers have been trying to challenge these research methods and come up with feminist research methodologies whereby the participants are not alienated and objectified. Women's experience and standpoint is important and one can reflect on this only when women are able to speak through the research without the researcher having hierarchal position over them (Kirsch 1999). Experience is itself organized through relations of ruling not visible to individual knowers and is therefore politically

constituted (Naples 2003). The content of women's experience should thus remain open to exploration from a number of angles: first as constructed knowledge from individual knowers, next as an expression of a relationship to other knowers and multiple institutional sites of power, and finally as a site of inquiry (ibid.). Thus, most feminist researchers try to address both the hierarchical and patriarchal features of traditional social science in the hope of integrating women's experience.

However, it is not only the end result of feminist research that is significant but the process that one goes about doing the research is also of utmost importance. That is, the process that one employs in performing the research is useful not only to get the best results without the exclusion of women but also to raise the consciousness of the women who are the participants. In employing such a technique, women can be empowered to transform their social relations and it will also help in raising their consciousness in that they will start challenging the existing paradigm.

Therefore, the power relationship between the researcher and the researched should be eliminated because the reality that exists should be seen not as how the researcher sees it but rather how the participant looks at it (Brayton 1997). Feminist research believes that the participants are the experts of their own reality since they are the ones living in the social world and they can recognize the phenomenon that influences it (ibid.). Hence, it is important to engage the participants actively in the research process beginning from the formulation of the topic until the research data is analyzed and presented.

When we come to qualitative research, it is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman 2004). That is, instead of explaining the reality by numbers as in the case of quantitative research, it tries to find out how the participants interpret their own reality and also experience their own world. Qualitative research has three noteworthy features: an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, whereby the former is generated out of the latter; an epistemological position described as interpretivist, meaning that, in contrast to the adoption of a natural scientific model in quantitative research, the stress is on the understanding of the

social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants; and an ontological position described as constructionist, which implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomenon out there and separate from those involved in its construction (ibid.).

Thus, in qualitative research, the researcher tries to look at the participants from the inside of their world. In doing so the researcher is very much involved in the research and the question of objectivity is eliminated. The researcher goes into the natural world of the people that is being studied and come face-to-face with them and their realities. The methods employed in this type of research are very much reflective of these characteristics. The most common ones are field work, interview, content analysis, participant observation and so on (Mason 2002). These methods usually require for the researcher to go out in the field and engage actively with the participant and get them in their natural settings.

Because of the characteristics of qualitative research and the research methods that it employs, feminists are known to favor it for their research. Feminist research tries to find out about the reality of the world as how the participant see, interpret and experience it in the same way that qualitative research does. Although we cannot say that all the characteristics of the qualitative research serves the purpose of feminist research and that some feminists have been critical of it, it still can be effectively used to yield great results.

When we come to the research topic at hand, it tries to find out the forms of violence that women who are engaged in the line of domestic work encounter as well as their denial of certain categories of rights. However, it does not aim to find out the number of women who are economically or socially affected being engaged in the line of domestic work but will rather investigate their social problems and how they describe their own situation and status. In addition to this, this research will also try to find out their backgrounds; why they are involved in this line of work; the various forms of social and economical abuses that they undergo in their everyday lives; whether they are satisfied with their lives; what they think the future holds for them and the type of attitude that they have for themselves and for those around them.

This research aims to explore the lives of domestic workers with the intention of giving them a voice as they are situated in their own reality. Towards this end, a primarily qualitative approach has been chosen since such research methodology will enable the researcher the problems of domestic workers from their own perspectives taking their interest and experiences into account. Thus, this research being a feminist in nature will employ the methods that pertain to qualitative research methodology.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information: participating in the setting, observing directly, interviewing in depth and analyzing documents and material culture (Marshall and Rossman 2006). These activities will help them to formulate their research in a coordinated manner. The main types of generated data in qualitative research are in-depth interviews and group discussions and choosing between them depends primarily on which type of data will best illuminate the research topic and on practical considerations (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Thus, choosing a good data collection method and sampling procedure is important because it is the main part of the undertaking where the researcher gets the information that is being researched upon.

When choosing the research methods and sampling procedures that are going to be used, there are certain things that the researcher has to take into consideration. The researcher has to choose methods that are practical, cost effective, time efficient, ethical and can help get the adequate information. In addition to this, the method that is going to be chosen has to have relation to the type of information that is sought (quantitative/qualitative), should be practical and efficient so that the researcher will be able to extract the information that is needed (Silverman 2005). Hence, the researcher has taken these factors into consideration and chosen methods and procedures that she thought fit in order to attain the adequate information for the research.

The researcher had initially wanted to incorporate on-site observation as part of the research in order to have a direct understanding of the working and living condition of domestic workers in their households. However, a lot of obstacles were faced in arranging her presence

at the households from employers as well as the workers themselves. Thus, the research was mainly based on interviews, focus group discussions, and some informal discussions undertaken with the employers and ‘*Delalas*’**.

2.2.1. Sampling Procedure

It is an obvious fact that researchers cannot study all relevant circumstances, events, or people intensively and in depth but have to choose samples on which they can undertake their research effectively. In qualitative research the amount of data collected is small because it does not strive to generalize but rather provide an in-depth view on the topic (Marshall and Rossman 2006). Thus, the selection of the research participants was purposive because the research being a qualitative one, had the aim of going in-depth in a relatively small sample.

The research area that has been chosen is the capital city of Ethiopia, i.e., Addis Ababa. This city has been chosen because it is one of the main cities where domestic workers are rampant and can be found in almost every single household. There are many women who are engaged in the line of domestic work from different social backgrounds, race, age, religion and culture which will make it an ideal place for the selection of participants for the research. From Addis Ababa again, three sub-cities were selected namely: *Bole*, *Nifase Silke-Lafto* and *Lideta* sub-cities.

The sampling technique employed here is hence the criterion. In this kind of sampling the sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). In this research, the problems female domestic servants face, are likely to differ according to their social and cultural backgrounds and their economic status. As a result of this, the researcher has put down certain criteria that will determine the eligibility of prospective participants.

** An Amharic word commonly used to refer to brokers

The first criterion set by the researcher is the place of birth. As it has already been said in the introductory part, most of the women who are employed in the field of domestic work are those who migrate from the rural parts of the country as a result of many cultural and economical reasons. It's been observed that these women tend to resort to this line of work as a form of escaping the economic burden they are likely to face if they want to make it on their own.

The second criterion chosen is the level of education that the women has. As it has been discussed previously, most of these workers are resorting to education in the hope of freeing themselves from the bond of poverty then engulfs them. Thus, this criterion will help the researcher in trying to determine their future aspirations as well as their awareness to various issues that are to be covered in the research.

The last criterion that the researcher is planning to use is the existence of family members which the domestic workers have to support with their earnings. It has been said that in most cases, women domestic workers are engaged in their line of work as a result of families that they have to support. This forces them to remain in their position even under oppressive conditions since they have to think about their families also. Thus, this criterion will help the researcher to identify the economic burdens they face in their daily lives.

With this idea in mind the researcher has chosen to use 24 participants. This small number is chosen because of shortage of time, budget and because in qualitative research the type data that is going to be collected is very large which might take longer time to analyze. Here the researcher would like to mention that no formula has been used to determine the number of the participants.

2.2.2. Data Collection Instruments

Having the above ideas in mind the researcher has chosen to triangulate methods. Hence, in order to obtain the relevant information, in-depth interview as well as focus group discussions were used in this research.

I. Interview Guide

A detailed interview guide that consists of four parts was prepared in Amharic language. It was open-ended and designed to elicit women domestic workers' oral historical narrative. The first part consists mainly of the domestic worker's personal data, their background, their family context, and other miscellaneous questions that required short answers such as "yes" or "no".

The second part consists of an in-depth interview guide on the overall working condition of the domestic workers. It consists of open-ended questions where the workers can freely express their conditions in terms of the works they usually perform, their accommodations, the meals they take, and rest time.

The third part deals with the exploitation and abuse they face in their daily lives if any. Here also the questions were open-ended so that the workers can be able to describe the kinds of problems they face in their line of work. The possible exploitation and abuse these workers are likely to face have been enumerated in the guide ranging from physical assault, sexual harassment, sexual assault, verbal assault, unfair dismissals, withholding of wages, and false accusations.

The last part of the guide deals with some human and democratic rights violations of the workers. Here the questions mainly concentrate on the worker's awareness of the existence of rights or laws which extend them some form of protection.

II. In-depth Interviews

This was one of the main data collection instrument used by the researcher to obtain primary data on the lives of domestic workers. Qualitative, in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. That is, "...the researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses" (Marshall and Rossman 2006). As a result, this method was chosen since it allowed the research not to be mainly

focused on the researcher's personal views but rather on the views and responses of the participants.

This method has certain characteristics that made it favorable to this type of research at hand. To begin with, "...the interviewer can probe for a more detailed answer and immediate clarification is possible" (Bailey 1994). By using this method, the researcher was able to ask further questions during the process where she felt that the responses of the workers needed further elucidation. Moreover, this method also helped in getting the direct answer from the participants since it "...allows the interviewer and the interviewee to come face to face during data collection" (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). This was beneficial to the research mainly because it helped their answers from being distorted by the opinion of others as a result of lack of consultation from others.

The interviews took place at different locations ranging from homes of the domestic workers, brokerage houses to cafés. They were undertaken under the guidance of the questions that were prepared in the interview guide by using a tape recorder. Also, additional notes were taken during the interviews to guide the researcher in the overall attitudes of the domestic workers. While the data collected through this process failed to provide the vivid material that a more broadly ethnographic approach would have generated, the oral narratives of the domestic workers during the interviews served as a powerful text for uncovering the tensions between the women's everyday lives and the demands placed on them by their respective employers.

III. Focus Group Discussions

Marshall and Rossman (2006) defines focus groups as "...a systematic questioning of a group of people usually composed of 7-10 participants who are unfamiliar with one another but have been selected because they share certain characteristics relevant to the study's question." This kind of data collection method is stimulating to the respondent in that it makes the participants reflect on what is being said by the other participants and give a well reasoned response rather than being one-sided as in interviews. Thus, this method was

employed in the research to provide the context of further exploring key issues identified in the individual interviews.

However, it was found very difficult to arrange a focus group discussion for those workers who are currently employed because their day-offs were on different schedules. Thus, the researcher was forced to arrange only two focus group discussions each consisting of six women comprising of those who were currently in the process of looking for jobs. These discussions took place in the backroom of two cafés which were rented on hourly basis. These women were randomly selected on the basis of their willingness and experience in the line of domestic service. However, since they were loitering around their brokers in the hope of finding jobs, the researcher had to pay them a certain amount of stipend for their time.

The researcher was a moderator in these discussions. The discussions were undertaken through the guidance of a prepared set of questions. Tape recorder was used to record the experiences of the workers. In addition to this, some notes were also taken as a sort of reminder on the sensitivity of the participants in answering the questions. This was done through the observation of their body language in whether they were timid or free. The focus group discussion sessions were considered as multiple sources of information for new insights into the magnitude and problems of domestic workers in the selected research areas. They were also used as a forum to triangulate the validity and credibility of data found through the direct interviews of domestic workers. They opened an encouraging door for reluctant persons to come out with their ideas and be able to contribute to the discussions. Since the discussions were spontaneous, it helped the participants to discuss their opinion and feelings freely on the topic. In the discussions, the domestic workers were more comfortable to discuss their problems with the people who share their pain and who can relate to them.

IV. Daily Activity Log

In the interviews, each domestic worker was asked to give a step-by-step and hour-by-hour description of the activities she often carries out as a domestic worker. This method was found to be effective in capturing how busy each woman was in terms of work load and

amount of break. It also precisely pinpointed the types of activities that these workers usually performed in their daily lives.

V. Related Literatures

In addition to the above mentioned instruments for the purpose of data collection, additional information was collected from secondary sources through intensive reading of related literatures. In this process; books, journals, articles, and different websites were consulted both from the national and international aspects of the research topic and area. In addition to capturing the already established discourse on the situation of domestics in general, this method has helped the researcher to analyze the situation and status of domestic workers in Ethiopia to the situation of other domestics in other countries.

2.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Once the researcher has collected the data using the appropriate method and has recorded it the task of analyzing and interpreting followed which is said to be the most complex part of the research process. The process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data is messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative and fascinating (Marshall and Rossman 2006). Especially for qualitative research it proves to be a very tiresome and complicated one because of the type and amount of data that is acquired. Hence the researcher has chosen to use the following steps for the management and analysis of data.

2.3.1. Managing the Data

Originally, the researcher conducted the interviews, focus group discussions and the documentation of the daily activity log in Amharic as a better means of communication and understanding with the participants. Thus, the conversation that had taken place between the researcher and the participants in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed or reduced to written form in Amharic and then translated to English. In order to easily manage the data that was collected, a list was prepared on the data that has been gathered. The field notes that were taken during the in-depth interview and focus group

discussions were edited to make them easier in retrieving necessary information. Then, the data collected was logged in accordance with dates, names, time and places of collection.

The data collected was read and reread over and over again so that the researcher can become infinitely familiar with it and can fully immerse it. Since qualitative reporting consists of descriptive data, it was found to be essential and beneficial for the research to display the daily events of the phenomenon under study. Thus, the researcher developed data recording charts for every participant and directly transferred the findings on these charts along with each daily activity log accordingly.

After the above processes of organizing and immersion of data, the researcher identified certain recurring categories and themes that needed to be addressed in the research through significant intellectual work which included questioning the data and reflecting on the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research. This process involved noting patterns evident in the setting of domestic service and in the expressions of the workers.

2.3.2. Coding the Data

Coding data is the formal representation of analytic thinking (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). The researcher applied some coding schemes which were basically informed by prior literatures read on the subject of domestic work. These categories and themes were thoroughly and diligently marked in the passages of the recording charts by using the codes. The choice of codes in this research was abbreviation of key words. However, the research was not restricted to the original coding but underwent some changes during the process of analysis as a result of new understandings, that emerged which necessitated some modifications.

2.3.3. Analytic Memos

This method was fully implemented by the researcher throughout the analytic process of the research. Notes were kept on matters that needed clarification or further readings. Reflective memos were taken envisaging the thoughts and insights of the researcher which were found to be invaluable for generating a constructive analysis of some obvious facts.

2.3.4. Interpretation

Here the collected and coded were evaluated for their usefulness and centrality so as to bring meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns, categories and the developing linkages. This is mainly to make sense out of them and present them in such a fashion that they will be engaging to the reader.

Thus, the data was examined thoroughly by the researcher in terms of its social, economical and legal aspects. In undertaking the interpretation process of this research, possible explanations were offered and some forms of meanings considered in outlining order to the general framework. In addition to this, other plausible explanations and their linkages to the data at hand were also made by citing negative instances of some patterns and demonstrating their possibility. Then, conclusions were drawn and certain inferences made. All in all, careful considerations were made on the usefulness of the data segments that were drawn in terms of answering the questions that were being explored and how they are important to the story that is unfolding about the social phenomenon of domestic work.

Finally, when writing the overall research, the *Chicago Manual of Style* was followed for citations, references and also in compiling the bibliography of the research.

2.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any research raises ethical issues let alone one designed from a feminist perspective. As Kirsch (1999) puts it “Issues of trust and vulnerability become particularly critical when participants feel encouraged by researchers to share long-held secrets or to reveal personal or confidential information during interviews.” In the research at hand the researcher solicited various forms of information from the participants in relation to their background, experience of violence, form of treatment they receive from employers etc... which can be categorized as sensitive issues.

Thus, in order to secure these ethical issues of trust and vulnerability, the researcher has employed the use of certain ethical considerations. That is, in order to secure the identity and

protect the confidentiality of the participants, they were not required to disclose their names during the interview or the focus group discussions. Instead, pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings from the research. In addition to this, informed consent of the participants was obtained at the inception of both the interview and focus group discussion in order to assure that their participations were fully voluntarily. The participants were contacted specifically on times where their employers or brokers were and will not be present in order to ensure their employment.

2.5. RESEARCH SETTING

As it has been mentioned earlier on, the focus of this research is on domestic workers in the city of Addis Ababa. Addis Ababa, which literally means ‘new flower’, is Ethiopia's largest metropolis and was founded some 100 years ago. This vibrant city, with wide tree-lined boulevard, fine architecture and glorious weather is one of the ideal places to explore throughout Africa. Generally, it has ten sub-cities out of which the following three has been selected as main research sites for the purpose of this study.

2.5.1. Bole Sub-city

This sub-city has 298,000 inhabitants in its 11 *kebeles*^{††}(CSA 2006). A majority of the inhabitants in this sub-city are well to do families who can be categorized as the upper class groups. Most of them resides in respectable modest houses, owned one or two cars and sends their children to renowned schools in the city. Here the domestic workers that were interviewed had a defined task that they performed around the house and their pay and lodgings were found to be in a much better condition than the ones in the lower or middle economy groups.

2.5.2. Nifas Silk-Lafto Sub-city

This research site has 304,550 inhabitants in its 10 different *kebeles* (CSA 2006) who can be generally categorized as middle class groups who are in a lesser economical status when

^{††}The smallest administrative unit of the local government structure in Ethiopia

compared to the first site. Here also the domestic workers that were interviewed were found to have certain better conditions and benefits than those found at lower groups.

2.5.3. Lideta Sub-city

But when we come to this last research site, it has 296,073 inhabitants in the 9 *kebeles* that are found within its jurisdiction (CSA 2006). The domestic workers that were interviewed here were found to have the most exploitative and abusive conditions in their work. The people residing in this area were found to be from a low level of income and most of the households were also found to be in shabby condition.

All in all, eight domestic workers were selected from each of the above described sub-cities since these sites were found to comprise of different income groups. Half of these workers were those who are actually employed and working in their respective households while the other half consists of those who are in the process of securing jobs via brokers or as they are commonly referred to as '*Delalas*'.

2.6. LIMITATIONS OF METHODS USED

The following are some of the limitations that were encountered in the use of the methods selected.

- Systematic observation of the domestic workers and the work conditions to have a concrete feeling of their daily activities was not possible because of their employer's uncooperativeness as well as the fear of the domestics themselves of losing their jobs.
- Even though the research incorporated domestic workers from three sub-cities ranging in economic status in the city of Addis Ababa, the number of participants it employed cannot be strictly put as being representative of the whole domestic community since as a result of shortage of time and necessary resources the participants are very small in number.
- The information gathered especially in the focus group discussions might be slightly exaggerated because the participants in that group consisted of those who are not currently employed and in dire need of whatever form of assistance any willing

person can give them. Here the researcher suspected a tendency of some workers to exaggerate some of their ordeals in order to get the money that they were promised to.

- The workers are so fed up with their conditions that they spontaneously bring out grievances that they have accumulated and stored for long periods of time to a sympathetic and patient listener. Hence, there may be a tendency for the workers to condense, exaggerate or even makeup their circumstances.

2.7. ADVANTAGES OF METHODS USED

On the other hand the advantages of the methods used can be enumerated as follows:

- The use of qualitative method helped in finding out the real interpretation of the domestic workers regarding their reality and also experience in their own world.
- Qualitative method also helped the researcher to eliminate the question of objectivity since she was able to go inside the world of domestic workers and the realities they face in their daily lives.
- By triangulating the methods of in-depth interview and focus group discussion, the researcher was able to obtain an all-rounded data on the general conditions of domestic workers in the selected sub-cities as well as the types of exploitation and abuse they face in their line of work. That is, the in-depth interview helped the interviewer to go in-depth by asking essential questions that probe and but also leaves room for explanations so that the workers can give immediate clarification while the focus group discussions helped in enabling them to be more comfortable among their peers and talk about their respective situations more freely.
- The use of a tape recorder in the process of undertaking the in-depth interview helped the researcher in eliminating any chance of missing important points and information that are likely to occur in the process of taking notes during the interview.
- The processes of transcribing, coding and applying the code helped in the acceleration of the research in terms of time. These processes also helped in the facilitation of the interpretation part of the data analysis since they helped the researcher in identifying analytical categories and themes that are essential to the lives of domestic workers.

2.8. FEILDWORK

The fieldwork for this research was conducted from December 2006 up to March 2007. Even though I have come into contact with different domestic workers almost everyday of my life, I had not thought that doing a research on them would result in such a discovery into their world. I have never tried to see their status from their point of view but just had taken their presence for granted. Because I had grown up with the help of domestic workers all my life, it was painful to listen to their problems since as a potential employer I was or could have been one of the people who abused and exploited these workers.

As it has been mentioned earlier on, this research was undertaken in the city of Addis Ababa with the selection of three different sub-cities. Thus, the first task of this research was to identify domestic workers who are employed in private households or are in the process of looking for work in households to render specified services such as cooking, washing, cleaning or taking care of children. Out of the sub-cities selected, those who are currently employed were located by going door-to-door and in schools where they conduct evening classes while those who are in the process of looking for jobs were located through domestic employment broker (*'Delala'*) stands or offices.

My being a young woman somehow helped in easing the pressure that these women felt so that they were able to open up about their personal as well as working experiences. However, most of them were suspicious of my intentions at first. They saw me as a threat since they suspected that I will disclose the obtained information to their employers or even their brokers. In due time, I was able to gain their trust during the interviews when they realized that I meant no harm. However, most of the women who were interviewed in *Delala* stands streets or in cafés were greeted in hostility when they returned to their stations by their respective brokers.

All of the brokers that I independently encountered during the undertaking of this research were unwilling to let the women under them be interviewed or participate in the focus group discussions. Nevertheless, I contacted some brokers known through some friends and family members who assured them of my sincerity in only obtaining information for the purpose of

the research only. Most of them become cooperative as long as they were duly remunerated. Even if these brokers can be considered as a hindrance in embarking on the research, their persuasion of the women to participate in the research was of immense benefit. Aside from this minor impediment on the part of the brokers, almost all of the women were cooperative to whom I'm very much grateful and ceaselessly indebted.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In Ancient Greece, Rome and various other early civilizations, domestic work was performed almost exclusively by slaves. But domestic work as an occupation reached its height in Victorian England where the great households of the royalty and gentry employed large number of servants of both sexes (Encyclopedia Britannica 1989, 4:162). However, just as all other forms of work have been transformed by the advance of capitalism, so has the organization and structure of household employment (Statham, Miller and Mauksch 1988). That is, as a result of the sexual division of labour that exists in most societies, domestic work in most societies came to be assigned to women only.

In talking of the division of labour between women and men in different societies, we are talking almost exclusively of gender roles rather than sex roles, determined by culture rather than biology (Rogers 1980). That is, the actual pattern of female and male activities will be devised by each society according to its beliefs about the reproductive functions of the sexes (ibid.). Thus, in most societies including Ethiopia, the line of domestic service in terms of cooking cleaning, taking care of children etc... has been reserved for women only as a result of the social and cultural beliefs that designate and restrict women to reproductive roles only.

3.1.1. Historical Background

The provision of domestic service is an area that has been covered by a significant number of writers, researchers and economists in order to determine a certain society's productivity. To mention a few, Bridget Hill (1996) has greatly explored the situation of domestic servants in England in the eighteenth century. By using diaries, journals, memoirs, newspapers and literatures of that period, the author examines the lives of the majority of domestic servants who were employed in modest households. As this author notes, even though there were many servants in England at this period many of them remained "invisible" in literatures and that "it was only through the words of their masters that we learn of their existence, discover their names and sometimes their origins, learn what tasks they performed in the household, and how long they stayed in one place" (Hill 1996).

Hill indicates that the term 'domestic servants' was often used to describe servants who were resident in the households in which they worked. However, she further explains that "sometimes they were employed inside the house and sometimes outside" which indicates that not all domestic servants were living-in servants residing in the homes of their employers. However, Hill clearly stressed the existence of a clear sexual division of labour between male and female servants in the tasks they were allocated to do. "For men there were places, among many others, as valets, footmen, coachmen, and butlers while for women there were places like lady's maid, chambermaids, and kitchen maids" (Hill 1996).

In an article published in the Journal of Negro Education entitled *The Plight of Negro Domestic Labor*, writer Mary Anderson (1936) explores the situation of Negro domestic workers in America during the time of the great depression. "In 1930 nearly one-third of all Negro workers- both men and women- were employed in domestic and personal service." (Anderson 1936) In this article the writer examines the living conditions of these workers at that particular time and describes it as "...having no definite wage scale, no standard for the length of working days and for the amount of work, non-existence of the payment of overtime and that many workers were expected by their employers to perform any service that may be required from the time of getting up in the morning until going to bed at night." (ibid.) She further explains that since household employment at that time was a relation between individual employer and employee, "It is the person who is hired, and not distinctly the labour of the person." (ibid.) This reflects the lack of standards in that line of domestic work since the workers are supposed to be under the supervision of their respective employers.

The writer further explained that as a result of the depression that hit the American economy at that time, Negro domestic labour was very much exploited. This was seen when most "white families dismissed their paid help when they were caught in the pinch of hard times", and when "newcomer white-collar workers who were well-trained and well-educated turned in droves to domestic service as a field of possible employment". (Anderson 1936) As a result of these conditions Negro domestic workers were forced to work at meager weekly earnings in order to support themselves and their families.

And lastly, the writer summarizes her article by giving some remedial measures of improving the working standards of these workers and insuring a measure of economic security to these hundreds and thousands of American people. These measures included "...quickening the national industrial recovery, incorporation of domestic workers in the existing national and state legislations, raising standards for domestic labour and a steady campaign of employer education..." (Anderson 1936) Although most of the writer's proposed remedies might work and are probably still working in the betterment of the conditions of domestic workers at present, her last remedy of educating employers seems to be somehow far-fetched and discriminatory. That is, by proposing that employers should receive education on the treatment of domestic workers, the writer seems to hold the position that it is only the employers who should have the requisite knowledge and not the workers themselves who should also be aware of the existing rights that are applicable to them.

Phyllis Palmer, in her book *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic servants in the United States* (1990) augment the small but thriving feminist literature on domestic workers. She explains that "servants have attracted the attention of historians and sociologists in the past, but mainly as leftovers to larger dramas of class struggle or results of migration problems" (Palmer 1990). In this book, the author covers a relatively narrow period of the interwar years, arguing that "...they marked a transition between the household economies of the early 1900s, heavily dependent on servants, and those of the post world war II era, when middle-class housewives had to manage without the help of others." (ibid.) In her research she uses detailed government data on household spending patterns in forty-two cities in the mid-1930s. Based on this data, she concludes that "nearly all middle class households had some access to domestic help and further explains that World War II has broken this pattern, as domestic workers left their household drudgery for better paid war work which left white, middle-class housewives to do their own cleaning instead of relegating the hardest, dreariest tasks to others, mainly women of color" (ibid.). All in all this author shows us that women employers were forced to take over the reproductive roles which they had relegated to domestic workers as a result of the sexual division of labour that exists in most societies.

When we come to the Ethiopian case, as in many other countries, domestic work used to be performed by slaves in the early times of its emergence. Throughout Ethiopia's early history, slavery has been an established traditional institution where power relationship of the superior and inferior was exhibited. The renowned scholar on Ethiopian history, Richard Pankhurst (1968) thoroughly describes the condition of slavery in Ethiopia during 1800-1935 in his book *The Economic History of Ethiopia*. Here, this author describes slavery as "...a great antiquity and well established institution which continued in existence through the 19th and early 20th centuries" (Pankhurst 1968). These slaves were engaged in various forms of servitude for their masters including the rendering of domestic work in and around their master's households.

Although these workers were required to perform all types of tasks of household nature, the author describes that there was common division of labour among them depending on their sex and ability. "Every domestic servant has his own duties and in no circumstances will consent to do other jobs, for instance, one man looks after the *tej*^{‡‡} and nothing else, another concerns himself only with the gun, another is merely a treasurer, and another has charge of animals" (ibid.). The author further notes that the nature and type of domestic services that the slaves render was considered as humiliating and degrading which is an assertion that also holds true at present. However, even though the type of work was in itself regarded as a humiliating task, in terms of their treatment by their masters the author claims that "Abyssinians^{§§} generally were very kind to their servants treating them as a member of their family especially on their marriage and death" (Pankhurst 1968). Although this assertion seems to reflect the established custom of hospitality of Ethiopian people which is somewhat still in existence at present, it does not seem to be true for the treatment that employers extend to their domestic workers at present.

Another author who researched the conditions of slaves in Ethiopia was Edward William Polson Newman. In his book, *Slavery in Abyssinia* (1935), the author describes the situation at that time as:

^{‡‡} A local brew of honey with an alcoholic content.

^{§§} A term which refers to ancient Ethiopia.

“...about one-fifth of the populations are slaves in practically every Abyssinian home, rich and poor alike. Although the majority of slaves are employed in domestic service, rich landowners also employ them in their land. The Abyssinians as a whole consider menial tasks humiliating and employ slaves to fetch and carry for them and create an impression of their own importance”. (Newman 1935)

Just like Pankhrust, this author also describes the division of labour among the slaves by enumerating the services that they render in their master’s households as follows: “... the common type of services for female servants were grinding cereals, gathering woods and fetching water; while male domestic servants followed their masters during journeys, carrying rifle, looking after cattle and the like” (Newman 1935). This clearly indicates the sexual division of labour at that as well as at present. But he shares a dissenting view with Pankhrust as regards to the treatment of slaves by their masters. He narrates their treatment as:

“...sometimes the slaves are almost naked or, only covered by few rags, are fed on the leftovers of their master’s meal and are left in a state of utter material and moral neglect and those who are old and ill are abandoned or left isolated in huts. Furthermore, the opportunities of exercising cruelty in the punishment of slaves are unlimited. In some cases the feet are chained close together or while in other cases the victims are flagged, mutilated and submitted to other kinds of torture”. (ibid.)

Even though this writer’s narration of domestic workers at that time might be exaggerated to explain the current situation, it is by far the more suiting than that of Pankhrust since it seems to be more in conformity with the current reality in respect to the abuse and exploitation that domestic workers undergo in their daily lives.

In addition to the above two writings on slaves in Ethiopia, their importance and detailed rules for their acquisition, possession and treatment is also contained in the *Fetha Negest* which was a set of coded rules that were applicable as the law of the country in the 13thC.

The *Fetha Negest* or the 'Law of Kings' as it was commonly referred to at that time, describes the situation of slaves as:

“The state of liberty is in accord with the law of reasons for all men share liberty on the basis of natural law. But war and the strength of horses bring some of the service of others, because the law of war and victory makes the vanquished, slaves of victor. Those whom you take from the people who dwell around you and the aliens, who dwell among you, let them, men and women be your slaves. You shall buy slaves from among them and from among their off-springs born in your land and they shall be for you and your children after you as an inheritance. (Aba Paulos Tzadua 1968)

This shows that slaves were expected to care for their masters and their children but most importantly that they were to be treated as mere properties that can be acquired easily. Slavery in Ethiopia lasted for a very long period of time and was only abolished in the year 1942 by Proclamation No.22 namely “*A proclamation to provide for the abolition of the legal status of slavery and certain other matters*”. (Endalkachew 1987) However, even if slavery was abolished in the strict sense of the word, the workers remained in that line of work since they possessed no forms of skills or training for other kinds of jobs. Then, the formation and expansion of towns in different parts of the country which materialized as the result of the country's modernization process created opportunities of employment for domestic workers.

Currently, the service is especially dominated by people who have migrated from the countryside to urban areas to seek for employment. These migrants leave their original dwellings as a result of poverty, lack of education and harmful traditional practices and come to urban areas in search of better opportunities. These migrant workers were in most cases women who were seeking job opportunities as a domestic in order to support themselves and their families. As a result of their lack of education and skill their only resort is to be employed in households as a domestic worker and be engaged in chores such as cleaning, cooking, and looking after children since these activities do not require any formal training.

3.1.2 Violence against Domestic Workers

Violence against women in particular is a global problem, in the home, in the neighborhood and at work, with rape, assault, wife battering, and sexual harassment among the most obvious manifestations. These are recognized as gross violations of human rights by the United Nations and other international bodies. Even though an international bill of rights for women, the *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and 160 countries are parties to it, violence against women is a phenomenon that is still being exhibited all over the globe.

The term “violence against women” has been defined in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women as: “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” (Art.1, The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.) Furthermore, in their book *Violence Against Women: The Bloody Footprints*, editors Pauline B. Bart and Eileen Geil Moran describes “violence against women” to be considered as “a serious public health problem that should be regarded as a form of discrimination which gravely affects women’s enjoyment of their human rights” (Bart & Moran 1993).

In addition to this, the *Protocol on the Rights of Women* which is a protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) states:

“Women are subjected to violence and threats of violence in their daily lives, physically and psychologically. Violence deprives women of this ability to achieve full equality. It threatens their freedom, safety and autonomy. Many cases of violence against women go unreported, particularly when they take place in the home because of the fear of shame. The psychological, emotional and economic conditions of women often alter their perception of reality such that they see themselves as completely helpless and unaware to make choices. In some cases the abused women do not even see themselves as victims.” (The Protocol on the Rights of Women 2003 Art.4)

Thus, according to these definitions, “violence against women” covers the physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation, abduction, non-consensual marriage and other traditional harmful practices detrimental to the well-being of women in general. In addition to this, it can also encompass physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.

When we come to the research at hand, women domestic workers are also vulnerable to violence both in the home and outside the home that they are employed in. The context of isolation in which these workers live in coupled with their low social status makes them susceptible to a range of abuses including physical, sexual and psychological violence. That is, the nature of work that they are engaged in confines these workers to a certain household and they often lack contact with other individuals outside that household. And since these kinds of abuses are committed in the confines of one’s home, it is considered relatively safe and effectively hidden from the public eye making the social sanction of these offences to be lower than those for similar behaviors in the public setting.

At the Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, researcher Mmatshilo Motesi presented a paper entitled *The Best Kept Secret: Violence against Domestic Workers*. Here he stressed that violence in the home can occur in various forms like “..spousal abuse, children abuse, sibling violence, parental abuse, granny bashing etc...” and that the term “...is often restricted to the violence that occurs between family members” (Motesi 1990).

By examining the situation of some domestic workers in South Africa, the researcher showed that the term ‘domestic violence’ should also apply for the violence inflicted on non-members of the family and that the violence which domestic workers encounter in their line of work is indeed “the best kept secret hidden by the privatized and institutionalized nature of domestic work” (ibid.). This is an important piece of literature that shows that ‘domestic violence’ is often construed to involve violence that is inflicted among family members and

excludes the ones inflicted on non-members residing with the family. However, when we come to the Ethiopian case, there is no available literature on the violence committed against female domestic workers in particular.

Among the above enumerated “violence” committed on women in general, the ones pertinent to the research at hand include physical violence like battering and bodily harm; sexual violence in the form of sexual harassment and rape; and last but not least, psychological violence through constant verbal abuse which often results in emotional distress and development of inferiority complex among domestic workers.

I. Physical Violence

Domestic workers face numerous forms of physical assaults in their line of work from various forms of family members in the household that they are employed in. These forms of physical abuse may range from slapping, shoving, hitting with hand or other objects, being spat on, and even having hot water spilled on them (Motesi 1990). But such cases of abuses are not reported and rarely reach the public arena since isolated from friends and family, female domestic workers risk losing their jobs if they speak out.

Amnesty International submitted a report in 2006 on the exploitation and abuse of domestic workers in Indonesian cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Batam, Balikpapan, and Pontaniak. This report recorded some of the extreme situation that Indonesian domestic workers face in their daily work. It reported that these workers are vulnerable to violence in terms of physical violence because “...these situations occur in the broader context of denial of a range of rights of domestic workers...” (Amnesty International 2006) It further explains that there are many obstacles in the existing system that hampers the protection of domestic workers from violence such as “inadequacy of national laws pertaining to physical and sexual abuse, the limited effect of legal remedies, and limited victims’ protection mechanisms under criminal law” (ibid.).

“Violence against domestic workers is rooted in social inequalities of power and rights between individuals of different races and classes” (Motesi 1990). Most of these workers are willing to face the physical abuses instead of reporting them since they cannot assume the risk of losing their jobs. Thus, this fear of losing their jobs, coupled with the failure of government authorities to protect domestic workers’ rights and to prevent, investigate and punish abuses committed against them, leaves much of the violence perpetrated against such women and girls in the shadows.

II. Sexual Harassment

It has been a very burdensome task to come up with a general definition that will apply to all forms of sexual harassments that are inflicted on women. The committee for the *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) provides the definition of sexual harassment in the employment setting in its general recommendations as:

“such unwelcome sexually determined behavior as physical contacts and advances, sexually colored remarks, showing pornography and sexual demands whether by words or actions which is discriminatory when the woman has reasonable grounds to believe that her objection would disadvantage her in connection to her employment including recruitment or promotion or when it creates a hostile working environment” (CEDAW General Recommendations 19).

According to the above definition, sexual harassment can be construed to mean any type of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature. “Conduct which constitutes sexual harassment ranges from innuendo, inappropriate gestures, suggestions, hints or physical contact without consent, with rape being the worst form of sexual harassment” (Bart and Moran 1993). Thus, looking at the above definitions conjunctively, sexual harassment constitutes elements of the conduct being of a sexually oriented nature, unwelcome by the recipient and exhibited in a working environment.

In Ethiopia, sexual harassment occurs in the streets, in public transportations, in the work place and most importantly within the family (Nestanet 1996). It can be said that it generally

happens everywhere and wherever a woman or a girl goes she is susceptible to one or any other form of sexual harassment. This condition is often exacerbated by the different socio-cultural norms of the Ethiopian society which condones men's sexually harassing behavior while affirming women's submissive reaction to such acts. That is, mostly the male who did the harassment is not blamed. But rather the society sanctions the woman for violating the normative culture expectations to which she is responsible through socialization into culture (Andargatchew 2003).

Thus, sexual harassment in Ethiopia is often justified by the naturalistic argument that men are likely to be aggressive as a result of their biological nature when it in fact is mainly concerned with gender socialization and power. This naturalistic argument supports that gender differences in sexual needs and patterns of sexual expressions are determined by nature which implies that while men are endowed with greater sex drives and greater forms of sexual expressions, women have lesser sexual drives and control than men. (Netsanet 1996) Men are often socialized to believe that they are indeed superior to women and that this superiority emanates from their natural physical and biological characteristics. This gender socialization will therefore make them harass women and put the blame on natural characteristics.

The other reason for the prevalence of sexual harassment in the country is the patriarchal nature of the Ethiopian society which is also related to gender socialization. (Original et al., 2005) That is, children who are brought up in this patriarchal setting will grow up believing that men are superior to women, a woman's place is in the home, it is only men that should hold public status and offices etc... This concept of patriarchy is embedded in cultural and traditional norms that discriminate women, religions that hold women in an inferior status, employment opportunities that give preference to men and some discriminatory laws that do not encourage women's participation in the public sphere. (ibid.) For instance, sexual harassment laws for the protection of women at the workplace or in educational settings, has not been enacted yet which envisages the country's failure to live up to international standards it has committed itself to uphold.

When we come to the research at hand, domestic workers are not exceptions to these prevalent forms of sexual harassment. Thus, in the case of domestic service, sexual harassment may be characterized by an unwelcome imposition of sexual requirements in the context of extreme inequality of power in the employer-employee relationship, combined with desperation to keep the job on the part of the employee. (Amnesty International 2006) That is, the isolation of the household and the difference in status between the domestic worker and the employer create an environment where employers can act with a belief that they will not face any consequences for their abusive conditions. Here, the domestic worker is at a disadvantage if she accepts or refuses the advances imposed on her. (ibid.) That is, she will feel humiliated and degraded if she accepts these forms of advances in the hope of keeping job while she will probably be dismissed from her job with no redress if she refuses her employer's proposition to engage in sexual relations.

Successful prosecutions of sexual harassment cases are relatively rare considering the scale of the phenomenon. Women domestic workers are often reluctant to report the incidences as a result of cultural, economic and educational factors. "...they may feel ashamed to disclose the incident; they may fear losing their jobs and not finding other jobs if they speak out which is specially true if the case goes to court, as the process may take a long time and discredit the worker in the eyes of other future potential employers; and the victims may not be aware that domestic violence is a crime." (ibid.) This failure of disclosure enforces the invisibility of sexual harassment that continues to be inflicted on women domestic workers.

III. Verbal Abuse

Physical and sexual abuses are, however, not the only harassment that domestic workers face in their line of work. Many of them constantly experience verbal abuse which may take the form of ridicule, jokes about mistakes, use of derogatory labels and emphasis on the 'stupid behavior' of the worker (Motesi 1990).

In most societies, domestic workers are treated and are supposed to be treated as inferior subjects which are under their employer's control. Catherine Beecher (1977) explores the lives of women in general during 1800-1878 in her book *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* in

America. This book which can be considered as a sort of self-help or self-improvement literature, gives guidance 'on the care of domestics' for women who employ domestic workers. Her main advice focuses on the unwillingness and insubordination of domestic workers for being called 'servants'. She stresses that this kind of calling will pain and offend the workers. She also stressed that by "refusing to be addressed as 'servants' the domestic workers of this era demanded some form of respect which is 'unbecoming their condition'" (Beecher 1977). It can be inferred from this writing that even workers of that time did not like it when addressed in derogatory terms.

This form of harassment and name-calling is very common in domestic service. On entering the workplace, domestic workers are often put under pressure to function in an unfamiliar workplace culture which is dominated by the norms and traditions of each and every employer (Amnesty International 2006). That is, they are exposed to different forms of doing things which depends on the instruction of their employer. As a result of being unable to accommodate all these differences, they will be prone to constant nagging and name-calling by their employers. This constant demeaning and belittling of the workers often lead to the development of inferiority complex and a sense of hopelessness on their behalf (Abiy 2002).

3.1.3. The Living Conditions of Domestic Workers

The overall living conditions and social status of domestic workers is an issue that has been dealt by a significant number of relevant literatures around the globe. Evelyn Nakano Glenn's article entitled *A Belated Industry Revisited: Domestic Service among Japanese-American Women*, in the book "*The worth of Women's Work: a Qualitative Synthesis*" (1988) discusses the living conditions of Japanese women who are engaged in domestic work in American homes. "These workers faced various forms of oppressions like physical burdens of the job, problems in pay and benefits, lack of raises in their wages and contradictions that are involved in the employee-employer relation like issues of personalism, racial differences and extent of intimacy" (Statham, Miller and Mauksch 1988).

In the same book, Mary Romero's article entitled: *Day Work in the Suburbs: The Work Experience of Chicana Private House Keepers*, examined the lives of Chicanas living in an

urban western city in the US. The author after exhaustively dealing with how these Chicana women find their day's work and the kind of relationship that they have with their mistresses comes to a conclusion that Chicana domestic workers share experiences similar to those of other minority women and compares her findings with the previous article findings on Japanese-American women and showed that "the workers found their options limited in low-paying, low-status, dead-end jobs" (Statham, Miller and Mauksch 1988).

In another book, *Doing the Dirty work? The Global politics of Domestic Labour*, author Bridget Anderson critically examines the employment situations of migrant domestic workers in major European cities. Anderson makes visible the power relations not just between men and women but also, more important between employers, mostly white middle class women, and their employees, mostly poor, working class women from Third world countries or other less economically developed European countries. Anderson's core argument center "...on the role that woman employers play in the exploitation and oppression of their domestic workers while elevating their status as employer, middle class, non-laborer, and clean". (Anderson 2000) According to her research, this undermining of domestic worker's status by their employers is most beneficial to "capitalism and men."

"Even when a paid domestic worker performs similar tasks to those done by her female employer, she is negatively and stereotypically constructed as the unequal other with little or no rights at all because domestic labor being defined in a vague manner, often forced workers to do an overwhelming number of different tasks." (ibid.) Even when some of the workers are able to resist such oppression in one way or another, challenging their employers might lead to deportation, a risk shared by many migrant domestic workers. Such an understanding, according to Anderson, "...is important because it allows us to critically envision the "slavery of domestic work" and helps us explain why it is mainly women of color who do such work, whether they themselves are immigrants or citizens, whether they live with their employers, and whether they are documented or undocumented workers between the country of the employer (the west) and the country of the migrant worker." (Anderson 2000)

In yet another book written on domestic service entitled *Muchachas No more: Domestic Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean*, article contributor Shellee Colen explores the situations of domestic workers in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean and raises disturbing questions about how feminists can best pursue the struggle for social equality. “In the United States, women as a gender have more opportunities than ever before, but the nature of those opportunities and women’s ability to take advantage of them depends on their class circumstances and often on their race.” (Chaney and Castro 1991) “As these women go to school at nights or on weekends, working for educational credentials that will allow them to move into white-collar work, they face various obstacles in the form of class and race struggle which are exhibited in the treatment extended to them by their employers.” (ibid.)

On the other hand, *Amnesty International’s* report focused on women and girl domestic workers who work for private employers throughout Indonesia, whether they work part-time or full-time, and whether they live in or outside their place of employment. It found out that most of these workers are migrants who have come from the rural parts of the country. All of the workers interviewed by *Amnesty International* said that they themselves chose their current profession and that they saw domestic service as “an opportunity to earn money and acquire experience outside their local neighborhood or region”. (Amnesty International 2006) It also uncovered that “...Indonesian domestic workers live in an inadequate and abusive conditions of work, have no contractual relationships with their employers, are subjected to massive underpayment compared to other workers, work long hours with no rest time, are not entitled to holiday time, are not allowed to get medical attention, and face major obstacles to joining a union”. (ibid.)

All of the above literatures examined the overall living conditions of domestic workers all over the world and found it to be poor and unsatisfactory. Worldwide, an important mass of workers perform different burdensome and tiresome tasks in and around private households in exchange for wages and/or lodgings and accommodation. Although the number of these workers is considerable, they remain invisible and hidden to societies throughout the world including that of the Ethiopian society.

In the few studies done concerning domestic workers in Ethiopia, one of the works worth-mentioning is *The Working Conditions, Benefits, and Rights of Domestic Workers in Addis Ababa* by Mesfin Messelle and Imawayish Melesse (1995). These researchers thoroughly examined the overall working conditions of domestic servants in three *kebeles* in Addis Ababa and also identified the benefits and rights extended to domestic servants. Their general findings indicate that "...[D]omestic service is mostly performed by migrant women the average of whom have been schooled but quit as a result of lack of time, money and interest"(Mesfin and Imawayish 1995). Upon further study the researchers found "...the workers to be living in unfavorable conditions since they were not getting benefits such as medication, permission to attend class, maternity leave etc..."(ibid.). In addition to this, the workers welcomed government intervention in regulating wages, leaves, and forming an association since the main concern of these workers was found to be the lack of job security.

In addition to this, Million Desalegn (1973) also conducted a research on domestic workers entitled *A Study of the Problems of Female Servants with particular reference to the ladies who are trained at the Aware Community Center*. Here, the researcher attempts to show how the minimum and maximum wages of the women trained at the center affect the reasons of changing the households domestic workers were employed in. He further attempts to show the general working condition of these workers as well as their health condition. At the summary part of the paper, the researcher points out some constructive recommendations to change the existing situation of domestic servants in the country.

Mesfin Messelle has also conducted another research on *Domestic Servants and their Poems* (1985 E.C.). The research which is done in Amharic attempts to show the types of domestic servants who are found in Amhara rural areas and their duties which range from household chores to farming activity. The researcher also notes that some of the poems which these workers cite while they are undertaking their daily activities which in turn express their innermost feeling about the lives that they lead.

Generally, to give a rough estimate of the number of domestic workers either nationally or internationally was found to be problematic in almost all of the literatures examined for the

purpose of this research. This was mainly because of the lack of available and accurate data and the prevalence of clandestine work relationships (Ramirez-Machado 2003). However, through the examination of case studies and surveys published on the subject it can be inferred that domestic workers suffer from poor working conditions in terms of lodgings and accommodation; remuneration; and in respect to the exercise of some fundamental human rights. In addition to these, their isolation from the outside world also makes it impossible to organize some kind of union which would allow them to improve their condition.

3.1.4. 'Worker's Rights' and Domestic Workers

The majority of women in the world work, but only a minority are recognized as 'workers' with the corollary of rights of safe working environment, equal wages, paid vacation, and sick leave (Tomaševski 1993). That is, even though women all over the globe are engaged in numerous tasks they are not statistically recognized as 'workers' in the strict sense of the word. The main shortcoming of all global economic statistics from women's point of view is without doubt, the invisibility of the unpaid labour in households and the informal and agricultural sectors, a majority part of which, in all countries, is performed by women (ibid.). Being hidden from society at large, domestic labour also falls under these categories of informal sectors.

As it has been vaguely mentioned in the above literatures on domestic workers, domestic workers in a majority of countries are not given the legal protections that are normally extended to other types of workers. Even though the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) stipulates the international standards on decent conditions of works and bounds state parties to ensure their application, their enforcement in most countries is usually minimal if not non-existent.

State parties to the ICESCR must ensure in particular: "...remuneration which, as a minimum, provides all workers with fair wages and equal pay for work of equal value without any distinction; in particular women are guaranteed conditions of work that are at least the same as those enjoyed by men with equal pay for equal work" and "...a decent living for themselves and their families according to the provisions of the present covenant"

(ICESCR 1986, Art.7). It also lays down further conditions like "... safe and healthy working conditions; rest; leisure; and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, as well as remuneration for public holidays (ibid.). Thus, state parties should incorporate these principles in their existing labour laws and assure their enforcement in order to protect the rights of all their workers.

In a study undertaken by Endalkachew Mengist (1987) entitled *The Legal Status of Domestic Servants in Ethiopia: the Law and the Practice*, the legal rights that are extended to domestic servants at that time is thoroughly examined and the clear-cut gaps in the existing laws of the country in terms of protecting the rights of domestic workers are pin-pointed. Here, the writer also notes that "...even though domestic servants are excluded from the domain of Ethiopian Labour Law, they can be governed under special provisions in the Civil Code. However, since many of the servants are not oblivious to the existence of these provisions, they do not make use of them" (Endalkachew 1987).

In most countries, domestic workers are often not included in the ambit of the labour legislation (Ramirez-Machado 2003). There are different rationales and justifications forwarded for this exclusion. Some argue that "...since domestic workers are isolated in different homes, it will be difficult to administrate their right of association or collective agreements" (Motesi 1990). This is mainly due to the private nature of domestic work which bounds these workers to their employer's households. Others assert that "if rights and protections are extended to this line of work, employers will undoubtedly refrain from employing domestic workers which will lead to possible rises in the rate of unemployment" (Mengist 1987). Yet others argue that "...domestic workers remained outside the protection of the law, partly because social reformers, often middle class housewives themselves, were ambivalent about possibly losing their help and being scattered in private households, domestic workers lacked social leverage" (Palmer 1990). Although all of these justifications might seem admissible in some particular instances, considering the types and forms of abuse and exploitation domestic workers face as a result of this exclusion, their incorporation to the ambit of labour legislations is an issue that should be given much consideration.

Although international instruments like UDHR, ICESCR and CEDAW stipulate special provisions for the protection of the rights of women in general, given its social and economic invisibility accompanied by low social status, domestic work has remained imperceptible from society. This also holds true for the Ethiopian case. Proclamation No.42/1993 which is the existing labour law legislation of the country, explicitly sets aside domestic workers from its realm and stipulates that their rights and duties will be governed under a special regulation which has not been enacted yet (Proc. 42/1993, Art. 3(1)).

Title XVI of the Ethiopian Civil Code deals with the contract of particular kinds of works. Within this chapter, there is a special section containing four special provisions concerned with the contract of resident domestic employment. Although this special part is placed in the Civil Code for the provision of domestic workers who are residents in their employer's household, it does not give the definition of what constitutes a "domestic worker". On the other hand, although there is no standard of a domestic worker, other literatures and legislations throughout the world seem to agree that domestic service requires the following components:

"...the workplace is a private home; the work performed has to do with servicing the household; the work is carried out on behalf of the direct employer, the householder; the domestic worker is directly under the householder's authority; the work performed must be done on a regular basis and in a continuous manner; and the employer shall not derive any pecuniary gain from the activity done by the domestic worker" (Ramirez-Machando 2003).

Among the most prevalent forms of denial of workers' rights, domestic workers are susceptible to deception and lies in terms of the contractual relationship with their employers, the kind of remuneration they receive and the extent of work that they daily perform are not compatible, they are prone to long working hours with almost no rest time, they have no holiday time, face various forms of obstacles in joining a union and their overall health conditions in terms of health coverage and assurance of favorable working conditions are not maintained (Amnesty International 2006).

In most cases, these workers are employed through negotiations made on their behalf by their relatives and prospective employers. Thus, even though they are entitled to have a contract stating the amount of salary, amount and type of work that they are required to perform and rest time, it is not often complied with. In most countries domestic work is considered by law as falling in the family sphere and therefore as a matter to be governed exclusively by family law (Ramirez-Machando 2003). Thus, it is this development of domestic work within the home which can be considered as the crucial factor in determining its exclusion from the ambit of labour law which in turn results in the lack of redress on behalf of the workers.

3.1.5. Human Rights and Domestic Workers

Human rights refer to the basic rights and freedoms to which all persons are entitled on the basis of being human beings. The situation of human rights in Africa is generally reported to be poor and seen as an area of severe concern according to the UN, governmental and non-governmental authorities. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights... [T]hey are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

When we come to the research at hand, domestic workers also face some forms of abuses on the rights to which they are entitled to on the basis of being human beings as well as being women. That is, as a result of the submissive and isolative nature of the work they are engaged in, most domestic workers are prone to human rights violations. To name a few, domestic workers lack protection and enforcement against their right to practice their own faith, their right to movement and communication and their right to have access to information about their sexual and reproductive rights.

Freedom of religion is a guarantee by a government for freedom of belief for individuals and freedom of worship for individuals and groups. According to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR):

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of their choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”(ICCPR 19, Article 18)

Even though, this covenant requires state parties to uphold its assertion, when we come to the case of domestic workers they are not allowed to pray freely in their employer’s homes if they are of a different religion, they are forced to eat foods against their religious convictions, and forbidden from going to church or mosques (Motesi 1990; Amnesty International 2006). In addition to these, the violations may sometimes reach the extent of pressuring them to change their religion to that of their employers’.

Liberty of movement is an indispensable condition for the free development of a person. In terms of this right, article 12 of the ICCPR stipulates that:

“Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement.”

However, many domestic workers face limitations to their freedom of movement, which amounts in some cases to forced confinement since they may not be allowed to leave the house of their employer (Amnesty International 2006). In addition to this confinement, they may not be allowed any types of communication like the use of telephones or letters with their friends and relatives which is a violation of one of their fundamental rights.

Women encounter numerous obstacles in their access to health care especially in relation to their sexual and reproductive rights as a result of various socio-cultural as well as legal constraints. If women’s right to the highest attainable health not guaranteed as a human right, neither women- nor men nor children- can enjoy it (Tomaševski 1993). Sexual and reproductive rights are grounded in human rights that are already recognized in international human rights treaties and other relevant human rights standards. They encompass the rights to: freely decide to be sexually active or not; freely engage in consensual sexual relations;

pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life; choice of a partner; consensual marriage; decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of children (Amnesty International 2006).

They also include the right to the highest attainable health which is enshrined in article 12 of the ICESCR requiring governments to provide for "...education and access to information concerning the main health problems in the community, including methods of preventing and controlling them..." which includes access to education and information relating to sexual and reproductive health. Furthermore, in relation to sexual and reproductive rights, the inter-governmental agreement reached at the end of the Fourth UN Conference on women in 1995 stipulated:

"The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behavior and its consequences" (Beijing Platform for Action 1995, Paragraph 96).

However, when we come to the case of domestic workers, as a result their susceptibility to various forms of violence with no means of redress, they also lack awareness of these forms of information about their sexual and reproductive rights. In respect to HIV/AIDS and women, CEDAW committee's recommendations^{***} on the avoidance of discrimination against women in responding to AIDS have been beneficial in the dissemination of information about the epidemic (Tomaševski 1993). Thus, when we come to the issue of

^{***} Recommendations on the avoidance of discrimination against women. (CEDAW, 1990)

- (a) That state parties intensify efforts in disseminating information to increase public awareness of the risk of HIV/AIDS, especially in women and children;
- (b) That programmes to combat AIDS should give special attention to the rights and needs of women and children;
- (c) That state parties ensure the active participation of women in primary health care and take measures to enhance their role as care providers. Health workers and educators in the prevention of infection with HIV; and
- (d) That all state parties include in their reports the effects of AIDS on the situation of women.

HIV/AIDS most domestic workers as others in their communities are aware of the serious implications of the epidemic as a result of its abundant coverage in mass medias all over the world.

3.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Theory is a set of interrelated ideas -how people imagine things to be- as the opposed to the factual nature of how reality actually is (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002). A theory can help us to understand by providing a system of explanation, a framework, a way of looking at things so that we may know not only that something is a certain way but also why it is that way, either in the sense of giving reasons for it or in the sense of revealing its cause (Ruth 2001). In other words, through explanations, theories give us ways to predict events and to control them. Thus, in doing any kind of research, it is important to choose a theory as deciding between different ways of conceptualizing and explaining aspects of social life and their interconnections.

Feminist theories, like other political philosophies, provide intellectual tools by which historical agents can examine the injustices they confront, and can build arguments to support their particular demands for change (McCann and Kim 2003). Put simply, feminist theory is a body of writing that attempts to describe, explain and analyze the conditions of women's lives. Charlotte Bunch, describes feminist theory as "a way of viewing the world as it provides a basis for understanding every area of our lives" while bell hooks depicts it as "a way to grasp what is happening within and around us" (Kolmar and Bartkowski 2005).

The basic issue that has concerned feminist theories is, depending on the terms one prefers, women's inequality, subordination or domination (Kirsch 1999). These theories try to explain the causes and conditions of women's subordination from different aspects. Feminist theories are therefore a means of examining and explaining all structures of domination, whether based on gender, race, class, age, sexuality or some other difference (Kolmar and Bartkowski 2005).

When we come to the issue at hand, domestic workers had little more freedom than slaves. Their personal lives are closely supervised, their working hours ill defined and long, with little time off. They often treated with little respect by their employers and people in their communities. Indeed, they are often “invisible” to their employers and have little or no job security or bargaining power, nor opportunity to organize to protest their working conditions or low wages (Bates et al. 1983). Thus, the use of feminist theories has been deemed pivotal in the examination and explanation of all structures of domination that is exhibited on domestic workers based on their gender, class, sexuality or some other differences.

Accordingly, since this research is mainly concerned with the examination of the lives of women domestic workers, different types of feminist theories has been chosen for the purpose of arranging the sets of concepts which will help in defining and explaining the domestic service phenomenon. These theories are similar in their focus on women’s oppression but are different in their definition of the causes of women’s oppression as well as the solutions they offer for societal and individual change.

1. Liberal Feminist Theory

Liberal feminism takes women and men to be equals in worth, dignity, and ability and therefore deserving of equal opportunity in society, education, work, and political authority (Ruth 2001). It had its roots in the concepts of liberal political theory which propagates right to education, democratic development, freedom and liberty. Thus, when combined with feminism it raised these issues with particular emphasis in affirming the rights of women on protection of civil liberties, primacy of the rational individual and removal of barriers to full participation in the public sphere (Bartlett and Kennedy 1991). Their solution for change is for women to gain opportunities primarily through the institution of education and economics (Ollenburger and Moore 1998).

Liberal feminists’ promotion of ignoring the biological differences and breaking down cultural barriers could be useful for the research at hand since domestic workers face different forms of cultural barriers in their line of work. They often choose their line of work since it is something which does not need any training and can be done by any able-bodied

person. Most of them lack the necessary education that can enable them to get other forms of works. In addition to this, they are not afforded legal protection by the existing laws.

Therefore, the principles of liberal feminist theories in terms of seeking social changes that will create a meritocracy where social rank is based on merit through education and legislative measures so as to bring about equality through law by the help of advocated programs like affirmative action, equal opportunity employment, employment equity and pay equity is reckoned pertinent to studying and analyzing the condition of female domestic workers in general. Thus, reforming the existing structure in terms of adequate political representation, coverage of laws and education is very crucial to purging the existing gender system of its discriminatory effects on female domestic workers.

II. Radical Feminist Theory

Radical feminism argues that patriarchy, a society built on masculinist values, must be hopelessly flawed, aggressive, hierarchical and violent (Ruth 2001). Contempt for women, an element essential to patriarchy, results in the exploitation and abuse of women in both the private and public sphere, in sexual violence, in economic exploitation, political subordination etc... (ibid.).

Radical feminists explored women's oppression both from the biological and social construction aspects and raised new issues like reproductive freedom, sexual liberation, violence against women and paving the way to creating and supporting women's culture. Their solution must be sought not in equality but in radical transformation, change at the root of society as a whole (Ollenburger and Moore 1998). Although radical feminists' revolutionary ideas of overall social transformation would not be beneficial for a poverty-stricken country like Ethiopia, their analysis of patriarchy and sexuality is vital to understanding the subordination of women and has been deemed relevant to the research at hand.

This branch of feminist theory was the first to introduce sexual and physical violence against women in the form of rape, sexual harassment, incest, pornography and domestic violence.

“Radical feminists’ analysis offered the first comprehensive feminist challenge to the *sexual double standard*- a standard that demanded female chastity while permitting and even admiring male promiscuity” (Kolmar and Bartkowski 2005). In relation to this, the pervasive problem of sexual harassment for women workers is very much under reported. It occurs when an employer or supervisor demands sexual favors from a female employee under threat of dismissal or other reprisal, often not made explicit, or when a woman is subjected to persistent unwelcome sexual advances or innuendos. Women who resist are unlikely to complain, much less take the employer or supervisor to court (MacKinnon, 1979).

In relating this double standard to the context of violence against domestic workers, most of the workers who have encountered the violence in the form of sexual and physical violence are reluctant in reporting these cases for fear losing their jobs and of being ostracized by their community. This can be analyzed through the existing structure of patriarchy in the country and the country’s cultural perception of this double standard which suppresses women’s sexuality. Thus, radical feminists’ argument on patriarchy, women’s right to control their own bodies, and sexuality which will enable them to be free from male sexual exploitation is believed to be important to the context of violence exhibited against domestic workers.

III. Marxist, Socialist, and Materialist Feminist Theories

Marxist and Socialist feminisms both analyzed the oppression of women from the economic perspective. That is, among these feminists, both patriarchy and class are regarded as primary sources of women’s oppression (Ollenburger and Moore 1998). However, both of their uses became obsolete as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union which made it unpopular to talk about a socialist regime discouraging others from using the term ‘socialist’. Thus, materialist feminism emerged with the same ideas to that of socialist feminism and argued that women have become the “proletariats of industrializing countries” due to their exploitation under globalization. (Kolmar and Bartkowski 2005). This analysis was done through the examination of activities like structural adjustment programs, violence, trafficking etc...

Generally socialist feminists accept the thesis that capitalism distorts social relations, that society is divided into groups or classes where one class is wealthy and powerful, possessing and directing the means to use and create wealth; and the other class is oppressed and exploited, possessing only their labour, which is used by the powerful to amass greater and greater wealth for themselves (Ruth 2001). They believe that such a system is not grounded in masculinist attitudes and beliefs alone but in material conditions of society itself such as technology, natural resources, geographic location etc... Thus, changes in circumstances can not be accomplished only by changing belief systems but by changing the material condition and institutions of society (ibid.).

Feminists question and challenge basic assumptions most people hold about the nature and definition of 'work' itself (Bates et al. 1983). One of the major problems associated with domestic work is that it is undervalued by most women and men and is unvalued by economists (O'Connell 1994). It is widely regarded as unskilled and menial while its performance is mainly dominated by women as a result of the sexual division of labour persistent in many societies. Accordingly, domestic workers are mostly assigned roles that are supposed to be performed by the females of a certain household. Women employers are conscious that their own ability to pursue careers is built upon a form of exploitation: paying poorer women relatively low wages for their domestic labour (Bates et al. 1983). As a result many women acknowledge not only their dependence on these workers but also some sense of guilt.

Therefore, since the above mentioned theories focused on the working class women and gave an analysis of women's subordinate status being linked to class-based capitalistic system and family structure within this system, they are considered as the most critical theories of understanding the conditions of domestic workers. Even though their analysis concentrated mainly on 'working-class women' it's beneficial to understanding the position of domestic workers since according to the practice in Ethiopia, it is only through the help of these workers that working women are able to go out and be engaged in productive roles by relegating their reproductive ones to domestic workers.

IV. Psychoanalytic Feminist Theory

Psychoanalytic theory has provided tools for a number of influential feminist accounts of the acquisition of gendered subjectivities in patriarchal societies (Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz 1997). This line of feminist theory advocates that gender is not biological but based on the psycho-sexual development of individuals and it is early childhood experiences which lead men to believe themselves to be 'masculine' and women to believe themselves to be 'feminine' (ibid.). Feminists in this line of thought believe that women's psyche is deeply affected by their past experiences.

This theory is useful to the research at hand since it centers on the gender socialization of children which is the basis for initializing women's oppression. As a result of the socialization process, most men are trained from infancy to depend on women for the satisfaction of their basic needs for food and comfort (O'Connell 1994). And like in any other developing country, in Ethiopia also girls are not often allowed to go to school since it is believed that their only role in life should be for the reproduction of babies and being involved in their upbringing. It is through this type of existing gender socialization that they are not able to get the necessary education which could emancipate them from the bonds of poverty that they're usually immersed in. As a result of the lack of any other possible opportunity many women migrate to the urban areas and enter the line of domestic work since it does not require any form of vocational or academic training.

V. Post-modern and Post-colonial Feminist Theories

In African studies, historically and currently, the creation, constitution, and production of knowledge remains the privilege of the west. (Oyèwùmí 2003) Post colonial feminist theory carries a heightened awareness of power relations between western and 'third world' cultures while post modernism refuses master narratives which purport to explain the whole movement of history and social life as a single interconnected totality (Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz 1997).

Both of these lines of thought are recent developments which advocated the use of our own experiences when talking and writing about something. The ethnocentric idea that the white

woman (or man) is the norm- measure of all things has dominated western scholarly writings in at least the last two centuries (Oyěwùmi 2003). Thus, these lines of feminist thoughts criticized western feminists' tendency of generalizing women's oppression all around the globe and giving specific reasons for these oppressions. They argued that there is no objective knowledge that can be applicable to all women. But rather, knowledge is subjective and linked to time, place, social position and other factors from which an individual constructs their view of knowledge (Ollenburger and Moore 1998). Aside from recognizing new concepts like diversity, questioning of objectivity and recognizing difference, these feminists were also engaged in the 'deconstruction' of literary texts since they believed that gender in itself was constructed through 'language' (Kolmar and Bartkowski 2005).

These thoughts of the origin of women's oppression being different in terms of location are important to the research at hand; since women's social, cultural and political status differ from one society to another. Thus, the arguments of post-modern feminism and post-colonial feminism will be beneficial to assert and analyze the working conditions, rights and duties of female domestic workers in Ethiopia with particular emphasis on different sub-cities of Addis Ababa.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY POPULATION

In this part of the research the general background of the research population will be dealt with based on the results obtained from the in-depth interview and focus group discussions. The general characteristics of the domestic workers is examined in terms of their age, educational attainment, place of birth, factors which led them to lead the life of a domestic worker, duration of activity in the line of domestic service, marital status and their amount of remuneration.

Thus, as it has been mentioned in the previous chapters, since the research is mainly concerned with the use of qualitative methods, the actual number of domestics employed in the study area has been considered as irrelevant mainly because the sample selected is not a statistically representative one. However, some variables have been selected from the questions raised in the in-depth interviews on the background of the domestic workers in order to grasp a better understanding of their status, origin and educational attainment.

4.1.1. Age and Educational Attainment

As it has been illustrated in the table below, the age of the domestic workers in the activity of domestic work was found to be predominantly comprised of young girls. Even though the number of participants in this research cannot be considered as statistically representative, it can be inferred from the findings that the line of domestic service is often dominated by young laborers.

Table 4.1: Age distribution of the study population

| Age | No. of Participants |
|------------|----------------------------|
| 15-19 | 5 |
| 20-30 | 14 |
| > 30 | 5 |

Source: Interview with domestic workers 2007, N=24

On the other hand, when we come to the level of education attainment of the study population, it was found that most of the participants were attending school or have stopped going to school due to various reasons. But since a majority of them were able to read and write, it can be said that almost all of them fall under the group of literate persons.

Table 4.2: Level of education

| Educational Level | No. of Participants |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Have not started yet | 5 |
| Non-formal | 4 |
| Primary | 10 |
| Secondary | 5 |

Source: Interview with domestic workers 2007, N=24

The research found out that the majority of the participants both in the in-depth interview and focus group discussion were attending school and were in the elementary stage in their academic status. They responded that their employers had given them permission to attend night school on the condition that they finish their tasks on time so that they can be able to go to school. Most of the domestic workers interviewed and those who participated in the focus group discussions were eager to continue their education and pursue other opportunities. Thus, most of them replied that they negotiated with their employers on their first meeting the fact that they have plans to go to school and adamantly expressed the fact that they would not take a job if their employers are not willing to let them go to school.

In addition to this, those who had not yet started their education reflected that the only reason that they have not yet started is as a result of economic constraints since they had to support their families with their meager earnings. However, they expressed their intention of starting their education in the near future and continuing it to the end since they saw education as the only means of escape from the realities of their current lives.

4.1.2. Place of Birth

Most of the researches done on domestic workers nationally and internationally revealed that the service was predominately comprised of women who have migrated from their places of origin (Mesfin 1995, Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997, Amnesty International 2006, Statham, Miller and Mauksch 1988). This research has also been based on participants who have migrated from their places of origin. The interesting observation made in this respect is in terms of the regions from which the workers have migrated from. It was found out that most of these women came from the Amhara regional state which can be construed in the closeness of this region to the city of Addis Ababa making migration to the city an easy access.

Table 4.3: Place of birth

| Region | No. of participants |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| Amhara | 11 |
| Oromia | 5 |
| Tigray | 5 |
| SNNP | 2 |
| Harar | 1 |

Source: Interview with domestic workers, 2007, N= 24

4.1.3. Push and Pull Factors in Domestic Service

The participants in the research gave various reasons for being employed in the line of domestic service. The reasons that they gave for being employed in this field were almost the same as the ones that they gave for migrating to Addis Ababa which includes poverty, family disintegration, desire to enroll in school, starting to make their own earnings, and inducement by friends and relatives.

Most of them mentioned the reasons for getting employed as a domestic worker was to earn an income which will support their families back home. Most of them came from socially and economically disadvantaged segments of society and were forced by poverty to reproduce the poverty of their families by not going to school to gain the skills that help to

get better paying jobs. Some also gave reasons like running away from the existing cultural practices such as early marriage and abduction that are commonly exercised in their places of origin. In addition to this, since village and sanitary conditions are often terrible, parents felt that their daughters will be better cared for and educated in the city (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997). As a result of this, there were also some workers who entered the line of domestic service due to the encouragement of their families and other relatives.

Table 4.4: causes for being engaged in domestic service

| Different Causes | No. of Participants |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| As a result of HTPs | 4 |
| To be independent from family | 3 |
| Death of one or both parents | 5 |
| To be able to enroll in school | 8 |
| Induced by friends or relatives | 4 |

Source: Interview with domestic workers, 2007, N= 24

4.1.4. Duration of Activity and Marital Status

With regard to the number of years in the line of domestic service, the majority of the workers have served for a period of 2-5 years. Most of them entered the field of domestic work as it does not require any type of skills and can be done by anyone without any form of vocational training. It was also found that the line of domestic service is also hard to leave once entered. This is because most of the women who are engaged in it felt secure and thought that it is the only thing that they can be able to do and would not venture for other opportunities for fear of not finding other ways of supporting themselves.

Table 4.5: Duration of Activity

| Number of Years | No. of Participants |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| < 2 years | 8 |
| 2 year – 5 years | 10 |
| > 5 years | 6 |

Source: Interview with domestic workers, 2007, N= 24

On the other hand, from the data that was gathered for the purpose of undertaking the research, it was found that the share of single domestic workers was far greater than those who are married or widowed. This shows the preference of single domestic workers from married ones and that married women are denied access to the line of domestic service as a result of the nature of the job which requires them to be on call 24 hours a day.

Table 4.6: Marital status

| Marital Status | No. of Participants |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Married | 2 |
| Single | 20 |
| Widowed | 2 |

Source: Interview with domestic workers, 2007, N= 24

In terms of having children, most of the interviewed domestic workers replied that they did not have children. And even if they had children they know that they cannot be able to continue working in this line of work since employers will not allow their children in their homes. Consequently, those who had children responded that they are now separated from their children and that their children are either living with their grandparents in the countryside or with some other relatives in the city.

4.1.5. Amount of Remuneration

The data collected in the in-depth interview and in the focus group discussions showed that most of the domestic workers earned a monthly salary ranging from 100 birr to 200 birr. In addition to this, most of the workers responded that they are still earning the same salary they

were getting when they first got employed and have not yet received a raise since it's difficult to ask for one. All of the participants in the focus group discussions confirmed that instead of asking for a raise which can lead to some form of atrocity in respect to their employer, it is better to leave that home and look for another one where they can be better paid.

Table 4.7: Monthly salary

| Amount of Salary | No. of participants |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| > 100 birr | 8 |
| 100 – 200 birr | 12 |
| < 200 birr | 4 |

Source: Interview with domestic workers, 2007, N= 24

4.2. VIOLENCE AGAINST DOMESTIC WORKERS

Violence in the home is not a new phenomenon. For many years the violence that was exhibited in the homestead has not been given the necessary attention under the guise that it was something that should stay within the family (Motesi 1990). It was believed that violence among family members was a private matter and something not to be brought to the attention of the public at large. However, in recent years this type of violence has been getting the requisite recognition in terms of 'domestic violence' since it was acknowledged that the domestic arena was increasingly being used as expression of rage, anger and frustration (Andermahr et al. 1997).

However, in most studies the analysis of the term 'domestic violence' is often restricted to violence among family members with special emphasis on the most likely victims of violence in the home, i.e. women and children within the family (Bart and Moran 1993). This kind of analysis seem to reject the violence imposed on non-members like the hired help who are often excluded from the realm of being a family member even though they reside with their employers.

This 'outsider' status makes domestic workers prone to two structures of dominance, namely economic dependence and sex. That is, these women due to their economic dependence on

their employers as well as their biological sex are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation. This is evident in the forms of violence that is imposed on them, the rights extended to them and the types of human rights abuses that they undergo being isolated from their friends and family. Their restricted access doubled with lack of adequate legal redress makes these domestic workers vulnerable to various forms of violence which remains to be hidden by the private nature of crimes in the domestic arena.

Thus, in order to understand and clarify the findings in this respect, different categories of possible violence likely to be exhibited on female domestic workers in accordance with those covered in the literature part of this research have been identified in order to analyze the experiences of these women.

4.2.1. Physical Violence

The status and role of the domestic workers in terms of other members of the family in which she is employed in is not a person-to-person relationship but that of a master and a servant one (Abiy 2002). As a result of this kind of relationship, physical violence is a frequent occurrence in the household as most employers assume that they are in a superior position over their domestic workers. On the other hand, the workers themselves do not rebuke this kind of violence since they are afraid of losing their jobs and thus would rather comply with the instructions of the employers and face the consequences if they are found to be at fault.

The in-depth interview and focus group discussion undertaken with the domestic workers showed that physical violence is committed upon the moderate number of these participants. Only a small number of the workers interviewed reported to have experienced no form of physical violence by their employers. The type of violence that was inflicted on the workers was often as a result of minor faults on the part of the workers like mistakes, minor accidents, diverting from the instructions given by their respective employers; answering back to their employers; disagreements with members of the family; and sometimes even in the lack of any obvious reason, as a form of employers letting out their anger and frustrations from others on these workers. From the findings, the common forms of physical violence that the

workers have experienced are being slapped, spat on, and kicked by foot or having nearby objects thrown at them.

Since this research set migration from place of origin as one of its criteria for the selection of possible participants, some of the domestic workers who were interviewed and who participated in the focus group discussions stated that they had been employed by their relatives when they first arrived in the city. In comparison to the scale of violence they encountered in their relatives home and others, most of the participants reflected that the violence in their relative's houses were far more severe than the ones inflicted on them in other homes. This can be inferred from the following excerpts of interviews undertaken with the workers.

'Alemitu' who is still employed in a relative's home, has worked there for almost a year. She came to Addis Ababa at the request of her current employer who is an elderly woman and needs assistance to move around. She explains her status as:

"The only thing that is keeping me from getting up and leaving is the fact that the lady has allowed me to go to school which is the promise that I had given to my parents when they sent me to this home. The lady is often irritated about all the stuff around her and hits me with everything she can find almost every single day."

In the same manner 'Zenebu' explains the treatment she received while she was at a relative's house as:

"I was only 14 years old when my parents sent me to a relative's home to work and pursue my education. However, the lady of the house could not be pleased by anything I did. So, she used to hit and slap me almost everyday for every little mistake I made. One time she even threw hot water at me for breaking a dish."

'Berhan' has worked for her employer for almost three years and explains her situation in the following manner.

“This is the first household that I have worked in since coming from Debre Berhan.^{†††} From the first day I got into this family of seven people, I have been in conflict with the wife/mother of the house. She does not like the things I do and how I do them. So, she gives me specific instructions. But since sometimes I’ll be overwhelmed by the workload around the house, I’d either forget them or do them in another way. When this happens she’ll often spits at me and tells me I’m no good or slaps me in the face.”

In most cases the domestic workers see the wife and/or mother of the household as their immediate boss. However, when domestic workers get employed in one household all the members of the family within that household automatically become their bosses. All of these members will have the right to order the domestic worker to do things around the house and even to reprimand her through punishments for any wrongdoing. As a result of this, even though most of the participants in this research encountered physical violence from their female employers there were also some who had violence inflicted on them from other members of the family which can be deduced from the following excerpts of some interviews.

‘Zinash’ who has been working with for her current employer for the past two years describes the treatment of her employer as:

“I am currently employed in a household which has five family members. The husband is an alcoholic who always comes home plastered. I have to wait up for him since all the other members go to bed early. When he finally gets home which is mostly after midnight he’ll start complaining about nothing in particular and will slap me, shove me around, or even throw stuff at me.”

‘Serkealem’ who one day aspires to be a football player, has now worked in five different homes since coming to the city. She narrates her experience in terms of physical abuse as follows:

^{†††} A city located just outside the outskirts of Addis Ababa.

“It is not only through the actions of the wives or mothers that I’ve experienced physical violence but also from the children in the households. I remember one house where their daughter had moved from overseas. She used to make my life a living hell. When I’ve finished my tasks and had time to study, she’d come to my room and tear up my exercise book. She would summon me to her room and if I did not come immediately used to slap me and hit me.”

From the above findings we can see that domestic workers in this research encounter physical violence from almost all members of the family that they are employed in. It can be observed that most of the women have suffered from physical violence from the time they have entered into the line of domestic work one time or another. However, in response to whether they have experienced this type of violence, they tend to relate their employer’s actions as a form of punishment that they should endure as a result of not following their instructions. This shows their acceptance of their subordinate status as a result of being economically dependant on their employers.

The participants of the focus group discussion also reported that they also experience physical violence. They attributed the reason for its infliction in the ‘laws’ of running one household being different from that of another. And if they did not follow the exact instructions given to them by their employers, they know they have to face the consequences and tend to accept the physical violence as something normal.

4.2.2. Sexual Harassment

In Ethiopia, as in many parts of the world, the extent of sexual violence is not fully known (WHO 2002). This paucity of data is mainly attributed to the small portion of women who report their sexual victimization (Original et al. 2004; WHO 2002). Despite this lack of data, sexual harassment and abuse still remains to have the most crucial influence on women’s lives. In most developing countries sexual harassment is often used as a weapon for promoting male supremacy and women’s subordination (Sandy 1994). This is especially displayed in the economic arena since women are dependant on men economically in most

cases. This is mainly because the existing social, cultural, and political systems deprive them from access to education and other resources that can affirm their economic independence.

As it has been mentioned earlier on, the term 'sexual harassment' can cover numerous forms of unwanted advances ranging from the use of vulgar or obscene language in the form of leering or catcalls, unwanted bodily contact such as touching or fondling, and even to rape. These types of harassment may be inflicted in a single incident or a series of repeated incidents and may cause depression, anxiety, stress, headache, weight loss, insomnia, lack of confidence, and other related problems (Rubenstein 1992). However, despite all these harms, most incidents of sexual harassments go unreported due to the various socio-cultural as well as legal constraints (MacKinnon 1979).

Depending on the form it takes, sexual harassment violates the right to integrity of the body and personality of every person. Just like any other women, female domestic workers also face these forms of sexual harassments in their daily lives. But, in the case of domestic service, sexual harassment is characterized by unwanted burden of sexual requirements in the context of tremendous inequality of power in the master-servant relationship combined with extreme anxiety to keep the job on the part of the worker. However, the sexual harassments that domestic workers encounter in their lives, is not only imposed by their employers and the families within the households they are employed in, but also extends to other people outside the family like neighbors, brokers and people in their community.

For instance, most of the domestic workers that were interviewed and those who participated in the focus group discussions were attending night school which usually starts at 5 P.M. and ends around 8 P.M. in the evening. When the researcher explained the elements of sexual harassment, almost all of the participants in the focus group discussions responded that they endure various forms of the mentioned acts on their way to and from school. They further elucidated that these forms of harassments ranged from verbal sexual remarks, sexual jokes, catcalls, whistling, teasing, touching, pinching, offensive sexual flirtation and constant references to a their appearances by male students who attended school with them as well as some neighbourhood boys who loitered around their school.

‘Adanech’ who is now in 5th grade portrays her experiences in terms of sexual harassment as follows:

“There are boys who wait for me around the corner from my school. They know the time for school so they’ll be there waiting for me. Then they’ll approach me and compel me to talk to them by holding my hands. They will not let me leave unless I talk to them nicely and beg them to let me go.”

In the same manner, ‘Beletu’ who is an 8th grade student describes her situation as:

“There was a man who used to live in our neighborhood. He used to follow me wherever I go and seemed to watch my every move. On my way to school he used to harass me with constant invitation to ditch school and have coffee with him. When I rejected him and said ‘No’ he threatened me constantly and I had to terminate my employment and look for another job.”

In addition to these forms of harassments being inflicted on them by people in their communities, the participants also faced various forms of harassments from their fellow male classmates. According to them, most of their male classmates were also engaged in the line of domestic work being employed as guards in different households. However, the participants expressed that even though they were engaged in the same line of work; the male domestic workers were not sympathetic towards them and often harassed them whenever they get the chance.

‘Debitu’ who has currently reached the 4th grade recalls her experience as:

“I go to school with most of the guards in our neighborhood. Even though we know each other and are very much acquainted, they are constantly asking me out in a suggestive manner. They regularly touch and pinch me on our way to school even though I tell them to stop persistently.”

Even though the above illustrated forms of sexual harassments exhibited on women domestic workers might seem ‘harmless’; there are instances in which they might escalate into the

worst form of sexual harassment, namely rape. As it has been mentioned earlier on, as a result of extreme inequality of power in the master-servant relationship, the worker's anxiety to keep their jobs, and the private nature of their work; domestic workers are often sexually harassed since the employers think that they can do whatever they want with them and get away with it. They face dismissals from their jobs if they do not comply with their employer's advances and if they do they will suffer impairment to their dignity (Amnesty International 2006). In this research also, it was found that some of the participants have experienced rape or attempted rape in their lives at one time or another.

'Serkalem' describes an experience which she encountered while working as a domestic worker as:

"In one home, my employer's brother who used to live with them used to make me watch pornography with him. If I tried to get up and leave he would grab me by the hand and force me to watch. One day while I tried to get away he gripped my hand and tried to sit me down but since I had had enough I tried to fight him away. He then begun touching my breasts and I shouted at the top of my lungs. when the guard came to see what was happening he finally let me go. After this incident I packed up my things, asked for my salary and left that home."

'Etenesh' who had been raped by her employer's son describes her experience in the following manner:

"My employer's son used to hit on me when other members of the family were not around. One day he left the house with his father and mother but returned soon afterwards and ordered me to serve him lunch. While I was in the process of preparing the food he came to the kitchen and started telling me that I had a nice body and that he'd like to sleep with me. When I rejected him and started calling for help he stifled me with my own pillow and raped me. When my employers returned I told the lady about the incident. But she wouldn't believe me and told me that I was lying. She alleged that her son had left with them and could not have returned back to the house. She even blamed me of falsely accusing her son since he's not capable of doing such a task and told me to leave her house immediately. I then went to my

relatives' house since I had no other choice and told them of the incident. They filed a report to the police and got him arrested. But he made bail and failed to appear in court since his family had sent him abroad."

'Etenesh' is not the only participant that has encountered rape when working as a domestic worker. 'Senedu' also recites her experience as:

"I was only 15 years old when both of my parents died of Cholera. Then, I came to Addis Ababa to work as a domestic worker in a relative's home. There was a man who worked as a truck driver who stayed with the family every time he was in town. When he came he used to bring me gifts such as scarves, cosmetics and so on which made me anticipate his coming. But one day he came when no one was home and after giving me the gifts he told me that I had to give him something in return and raped me. He told me that if I ever told anybody, he'd tell them that it was all my fault and they would throw me out of their house and I'd become a destitute. So, I never told a soul but convinced my employers who were my relatives to find me another job so that I can get away from him."

In addition to these forms of manifestation of sexually harassing behavior from their employers and people from their community, some workers have also recalled their experiences in terms of brokers who got them employed. One of these workers is 'Taytu' who describes a certain broker's actions as:

"Even though I retain most of my employment through the help of my relatives and friends, I once contacted a broker who had a good reputation of securing jobs rapidly since I was in dire need of one at that time. However, when I went to his office to contact him, he saw my desperation and said that he would get me employed for 200 birr if I slept with him."

From the above findings we can see that the workers had different forms of experiences in which they've encountered various forms of sexual harassment ranging from 'minor' verbal insults of a sexual nature to the gravest form of harassment in the form of rape. Just as any other women, domestic workers also face harassments in their line of work. But what makes

their experience peculiar in nature, is their relationship with their employers which situates them in an inferior and subordinate position. They are dependant on their employers economically and do not want to jeopardize their situation by reporting the incidences. For instance, among the participants that have been raped, only two of them had reported the incident to the police through the help of their relatives.

Their actions could be related to the existing socio-cultural, educational and legal constraints that are applicable to them. First, these women feel ashamed to disclose the incidence to anyone since it is usually considered a taboo to speak openly about sex. In addition to this, a conservative attitude nurturing gender stereotypes whereby a woman is confined to the private sphere and should refrain from having sexual relationships before marriage still prevails especially among the least educated in the country (Original et al. 2004). Thus, most domestic workers who encountered sexual harassment and even those who did not responded that they would rather keep silent rather than disclosing such incidents for fear of being ostracized by their community and employers.

Secondly, these victims were found to be unaware of the fact that the sexual harassment that was inflicted on them was a crime. In most cases, the harassment was camouflaged as acceptable male behaviour and normal gender interaction which leads to a tendency of regarding these types of acts as harmless. Thus, most of the participants who had fallen prey to such acts, exhibited a tendency of disregarding the acts under the guise of 'typical' and 'normal' male behaviors due to this type of conditioning coupled with their economic dependence on their employers,.

Lastly, the issue of sexual harassment has not been given the appropriate attention in the existing legal structure of the country. The Ethiopian criminal law identifies sexual assault such as rape and attempted rape as a separate form of gender-based violence with its own specific sanctions. Thus, sexual harassment laws are not meant to cover sexual assault and other separate legal provisions are stipulated to address these crimes. However, aside from stipulations on acts which are considered under 'sexual assaults' which includes rape and attempted rape, there are no specific legal provision that deal with sexual harassments in

particular. Furthermore, even though Ethiopia has pledged to incorporate international principles that are stipulated in some major instruments like UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, DEVAW, and ACHPR; it has not yet harmonized its national laws in relation to these international instruments.

4.2.3. Verbal Abuse

This form of violence is very common in the activity of domestic service (Mesfin 1885 E.C.). In this research also, verbal abuse was found to be the most frequent type of violence to the point of becoming a norm in the line of domestic work. The Ethiopian society regards domestic work as a humiliating line of work while relating the workers as inferior subjects under their employers. As a result, domestic workers are prone to constant nagging and name-calling from their employers as well as other people from the community.

The violence inflicted verbally took the form of ridicule; nagging; patronizing; demeaning; belittling; out right name-calling and the use of derogatory labels such as ‘gered’ and ‘bada’^{†††}. The participants responded that they are often regarded as stupid as a result of not being acquainted with some utensils for not having used them before and not doing their work in accordance with their employer’s instruction which led to some actions such as name-calling and constant nagging. All of the participants underwent this form of abuse from their employers, brokers and other people in their community which denotes the commonness of the abuse in the line of domestic service. Some of the common verbal abuses mentioned by the participants are as follows:

“...telling you to do something is like pouring water on a stone...because you are not different from one!”

“...you cannot be able to understand ...since you are from the countryside!”

“...you are lazy, and will always be lazy as long as you are a ‘gered!’”

^{†††} An Amharic word which denotes a non-relative or outsider.

“...you are a ‘gered’...so you will always be stupid!”

“...you think you can be someone else by going to school? As long as you are working as a domestic in other people’s homes you cannot be able to change!”

“...if you did your tasks with as much as half of the energy you put in your school work you could have achieved something!” etc...

‘Senedu’'s experience in this regard summarizes almost all of the participants’ responses to the nature of verbal abuse they encounter. She said:

“In terms of verbal abuse, I have been called every kind of disgusting name you can think of. Some employers treat me as if I’m not a human being and do not deserve any kind of respect. They often hold me in a degraded position and treat me almost like an animal with no brain of my own. Besides the name calling there is always the nagging in terms of the work that I am assigned to do. Some employers constantly nag and patronize me by saying that I am stupid and cannot do anything right even if my life depended on it. This often leads me to lose hope and start blaming the circumstances of my life.”

This attitude of employers towards their domestic workers may largely be influenced by the belief that the workers are in an inferior position to them. This belief is clearly illustrated in the above responses of the participants. All of the participants indicated that they were constantly and continually told that they were stupid when in fact they were trying to do their utmost best. From all of these responses, it can be construed that being constantly reprimanded by their employers led the workers to have low self esteem and low perception towards themselves and the line of work they’re engaged in. It can also be observed that this kind of perception has in turn led them to develop some sort of inferiority complex.

Because of the stigma attached to domestic service, the researcher found out that most of the workers were sensitive to the implication that their employers just considered them as mere servants or house cleaners. These workers also acknowledged that their employers were in

the position of authority over them. In some cases, when the verbal abuse becomes too difficult to bear, some workers were forced to leave their current employment and look for other employment. However, this option is not available for all domestic workers since loss of a job implies loss of accommodation and income which may result in great suffering for the domestic as well as her family. Thus, a majority of the participants opted to stay and suffer the abuse in order to have a place to stay and money to send to their families.

From the above findings in regards to physical, sexual and verbal forms of violence exhibited on domestic workers, it can be generally construed that these women face double forms of oppressions in terms of their biological sex and their economic status. This can be best explained thorough explanations offered by the socialist/materialist feminism line of thought which analyzes women's oppression in terms of sex-class structure, the family and the hierarchical sexual division of labour. In the case of domestic workers also, it was found that as a result of their economic dependence on their employers, they are face various forms of violence in their line of work. In addition to this economic analysis, the patriarchal nature of the country coupled with the form of socialization process they have undergone in their early lives can be offered as valid explanations for their susceptibility to different forms of violence.

4.3. DENIAL OF WORKER'S RIGHTS TO DOMESTIC WORKERS

As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, in most countries domestic workers are excluded from the ambit of the protection extended to workers in labour legislations (Endalkachew 1987). Their rights and duties are therefore defined in accordance with the will of their respective employers. Even if there are some sorts of legislations that addresses their issues, their applicability is limited as a result of the lack of awareness on the part of the domestic workers themselves as well as that of enforcement on the part of authorities (Amnesty International 2006).

In Ethiopia, the Civil Code of 1960 has some special provisions that are found in Chapter Two of Title XVI, which deal with live-in domestic workers in particular. Here, even though the definition for what constitutes as a domestic worker is not given, it can be inferred that

the employee-employer relationship is between two physical persons where the employee has to work under the employer's direction for a certain amount of remuneration and provide service for the exclusive personal care of the employer. (Civil Code 1960, Art.2512) However, these special provisions are only four in number and thus are limited in application.

4.3.1. Absence of Contractual Relationship with Employers

Cumulative readings of Art. 2514 and Art. 2601 of the Civil Code, show that the general part of Title XVI applies to resident domestic workers without affecting the special provisions. According to these articles, parties to the contract of domestic service must give their consent. That is, the employer has the right to choose his employee and vice versa. In the legal context, this consent of the parties should be reflected in the form of offer and acceptance. In addition to this, in order to be a legally binding contract, the parties need to have the requisite capacity to enter into juridical acts, define the object of their contract, and follow the special formality designated for the type of contract they are entering into (Civil Code 1960).

However, according to the responses of the participants, none of them were given contracts which fulfill the above mentioned legal requirements of employment. Instead, there were oral agreements about the types of tasks they were expected to carry out, the salary they would be getting, where they would be living, and the number of family members since most of them retained jobs via the help of relatives.

'Alemitu' who always finds jobs through the help of her relatives explains her relationship with her employers as:

"I didn't have any contractual relationship with my past or current employer. I got hired through relatives and there is no need for guarantees since the employer most probably knows my relatives. Thus, I don't sign any kind of contract and all our agreements are made orally."

In the same manner, 'Zenebu' also describes her relationship with her employer as:

“It is through the help of relatives that I always retain work. So, my employers are familiar with my relatives and we always enter into oral agreements. After all it’s for the security of the employers that you’re supposed to secure a guarantee. And this is unnecessary since they already know each other.”

On the contrary, those who secured work through brokers or ‘Delalas’ responded that they entered into a sort of ‘contract’ which includes names, address, and signatures of the employee and employer; name of a guarantor who in most cases is a relative of the domestic; and amount of salary. However, it was deduced from the responses given by the participants that this kind of ‘contract’ is put into practice as a form of security for the employers rather than the protection of the domestic worker’s rights.

As it has been mentioned earlier on, due to the difficulty in arranging a convenient time, all of the participants in the focus group discussions were those who retained jobs through brokers since they could be contacted easily. Thus, in relation to their respective relationships with their employers, all of them had signed a ‘contract’. In the discussions it was reached onto a consensus that the purpose of this form of agreement was actually to guarantee the employer in cases of theft or any other possible crimes that are likely to be committed by the domestic workers.

4.3.2. Inadequate and Abusive Conditions of Work

Since the line of domestic service is often socially and economically invisible to policy makers and authorities (Rogers 1980) the general working conditions of the workers can be termed as ‘inadequate’ and ‘abusive’. In addition to this, the service is also held in an inferior status when compared to other lines of work which exacerbates the exploitative nature of the work. This can be inferred from the general conditions of wages; lodgings and accommodations; working time and leave periods; and health benefits awarded to domestic workers.

4.3.2.1. Wages

Domestic workers are subjected to an enormous standard of underpayment when compared to other workers. As it has been predetermined in previous sections, most of the participants that has been interviewed earned between 100-150 birr per month. When compared to the burden of work they undertake on a daily basis, this amount can be termed as very meager. Also, most of the participants both in the in-depth interview as well as the focus group discussions had some form of family they had to support. Generally, it can be concluded from the responses given by the participants that what they were earning and what they had to endure as a domestic worker were unjustified.

In relation to this, ‘Berhan’ whose current salary is 100 birr per month stated that:

“Both of my parents who are elderly still live in the countryside. I have to send them some money every month since they have no one else to support them. In addition to this I also have to pay 20birr per month for my school tuition. So, when it comes down to it, I have nothing at the end of each month for myself.”

Similarly, ‘Worke’ who earns a monthly salary of 120 birr shares her experience in terms of her expenses in the following manner:

“I have a son who lives with my relatives here in Addis. With the little amount of money I earn every month, I have to buy him clothes, books for school as well as give some money for my relatives for his other daily needs. Sometimes I even have to borrow some money to make ends meet since I earn very little amount of money. So, at the end of the day I don’t have any money left for myself let alone for saving.”

The scanty status of domestic worker’s earnings can be related to the absence of any stipulations as regards to a standard amount of salary to be entitled to these workers. According to the ILO, domestic workers should have a standard of minimum legal protection which among other stipulations, also covers “...minimum wage and payment of wages.” (Ramirez-Machado 2003) But in most countries including Ethiopia, domestic workers are denied minimum wage protection because most officials fear that setting one will result in an increase of the rate of unemployment since employers will be reluctant in hiring

(Endalkachew 1987; Palmer 1990). However, even though administrating the rights of domestic workers might be challenging as a result of the unregulated character of the institution, this does not justify denial of these rights to which Ethiopia has undertaken to respect and uphold when ratifying relevant international conventions.

In addition to unjustified nature of the amount of remuneration to which domestic workers are entitled to, they also face exploitative conditions exhibited in the form of withholding of their wages. That is, their employers may deny them their earnings under the guise of various reasons which may range from minor ones such as saving it for them; a form of compensation for the fault of the worker such as breaking utensils; or for not earning the salary as a result of falling ill. In relation to this, the experiences of the participants are illustrated in the following manner:

‘Addis’:

“When I first came to Addis Ababa I was employed in a relative’s home who withheld my salary for a period of 6 months saying that she was saving it for me. She told me that if she gave it to me I would spend it all. Even though she gave me this reason, when I asked her to buy certain things for me she refused saying that it was unnecessary and that I should be happy just having food in my stomach. After some time I found another job and left that household. But since she was a relative I could not ask for my money so I just left.”

‘Senedu’:

“I used to get sick very often in one home and was not able to work fully. I was sick on and off and endured my pain and tried to do as much as I can. But my employer terminated my employment and ordered me to go to my relative’s without giving me my salary for eight months. When my brother who was also the guarantor for my employment went to ask for my salary, she refused to give it him saying that the time I was sick was much greater than the time I was working and that I was a burden on her and did not deserve any kind of payment.

‘Worke’:

“In the home I’m currently employed in I earn 100 birr per month. One day I accidentally broke a glass while I was washing it. At the end of the month, my employer deducted and withheld 50 birr from my salary as a form of compensation saying that the glass I broke was very expensive.”

From the above stories we can infer that domestic workers face burdens in terms of both the amount of remuneration they are awarded for their work as well as the process of withholding of their wages. All of the participants in the in-depth interview and focus group discussions responded that they have no means of redress for these situations and no other alternative other than going to their relatives for help. This shows that they are not aware of their rights and are not familiar with the possible forms of legal prosecutions^{§§§} that they can undertake which could be related to their economic as well as educational status.

4.3.2.2 Accommodation and Lodgings

Domestic workers are also prone to living conditions which are inadequate and abusive in nature. In addition to this, the regard of domestic workers as inferior by their respective employers, tend to make them susceptible to abusive conditions in terms of accommodations and lodgings.

‘Berhan’ describes her accommodation and lodgings in the following manner:

“Currently I do not have a bedroom. I sleep with another girl (a relative of the employers) on the sofa. In terms of provision of food I don’t have any problem. But I don’t eat the same food as my employers usually. The kitchen which I work in is very small and I have to cook food with fire wood.”

Similarly, ‘Elsa’ describes her situation as:

“Currently, I sleep in the kitchen which is very cold during the night since the room is made from corrugated iron. But I am provided with clean sheets and a blanket. But

^{§§§} Even though domestic workers are not currently covered under Proc. 42/1993, they can file civil suits against their employers.

there were homes where I had to sleep on the floor on a mat. And in some homes they just give you sheets or a cover and not both. Most employers say that sheets are not necessary for maids. Currently I eat the same food as my employers. But I have come across some homes who forbade me to eat certain things or where I had to cook a different meal for myself. The rooms I do my work in are normally convenient I either use gas cylinder, coal or stove gases.”

Another account on the accommodation and lodgings made by ‘Adanech’ goes:

“I don’t have a bedroom of my own. Since we live in a small space but I do have my own bed. I have come across one employer who used to count the ‘Injera’ before going to work so that she will know what has been taken. But currently there is no problem I eat the same food as my employers. The kitchen is somewhat convenient but I have to bake ‘Injera’ using firewood and the smoke often hurts my eyes.”

From the above findings it can be inferred that most of the participants face inadequate accommodations in terms of living space. That is, most of them are not provided with appropriate sleeping space as well the necessary materials such as sheets and bed covers. In addition to this, according to the responses obtained from the participants, the provision of inadequate food both in terms of quality and quantity also seems to be prevalent.

4.3.2.3. Working Time and Leave Periods

In addition to the standard of accommodation and lodging, domestic workers are also prone to long working hours with no rest time. Normally, live-in domestic workers are expected to work seven days a week with no rest time and may also be on call 24 hours a day in certain households. Working hours and rest time usually depends on the will of their employers. They might even be susceptible to situations where they are forbidden to take their designated day offs per month or during holiday time.

In addition to their burdensome working hours, the participants also expressed remarks in relation to denial of regular breaks. For instance, ‘Debitu’ expressed her complaints in the following manner:

“I generally don’t have any breaks during the day since most of the members of the family are around the house all day long. So, I’m on call throughout the day doing all sorts of tasks. The only rest time I can afford during the day is when they order me to prepare coffee. Even though it’s also another assigned task, since I can sit while preparing it I can be able to rest for a while.”

Even though lack of legal regulations and the ‘private’ nature of domestic work made it impossible to monitor the exact number of hours worked by domestic workers, by analyzing the common results of the participants in terms of the *Daily Activity Log* implemented in this research, it was somewhat possible to pin-point a common working hour based on the responses given by the workers.

A majority of the participants described their daily working hours in the following manner:

Daily Activity Log of Domestic Workers

| Time | Tasks |
|-------------------------|---|
| 5:00 a.m. – 7:00 a.m. | Cleaning the compound, preparing and serving breakfast. |
| 7:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | Cleaning the house which includes different tasks such as making beds of the family members; sweeping and mopping floors; dusting things and washing utensils used for breakfast. |
| 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Preparing and serving lunch. |
| 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Engaging in different tasks which may include washing cloths, ironing, cleaning the compound, preparing coffee etc... |
| 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. | Attending school. |
| 8:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. | Serving dinner, washing dishes, baking ‘Injera’ etc... |

From the above daily activity log, it can be inferred that domestic workers have a very tight daily schedule which keeps them busy throughout the day. Furthermore, most of the participants responded that they did not have the day off on holidays and that they even work even harder on such occasions since there are a lot of things that needs to be prepared during those times. In addition, most of them responded that even tough they are supposed to have one day off every month, they did not ask their employers to have a day off for fear of losing their jobs altogether. There was a general consensus among the participants in the focus group discussion in terms of employers not liking it when the worker takes a day off. Also, according to them, if the employer lets them go to school then there is a presumption that they will not have a day off on a monthly basis.

4.3.2.4. Health Conditions

“Thank God! I have never been seriously ill on the job. But one time I was sick for a couple of days and my employers did not believe me and thought I was faking it. They only regarded it as a leeway of avoiding my daily duties.”

“When I fell ill I had to continue working since my employer thought I was faking it to get out of my assigned responsibilities”

“At one time I was having constant headaches and shivering a lot and was unable to undertake my tasks. However, my employers did not believe me they thought I was faking it to get out of my responsibilities. They forbade me from taking rests. So, I had to endure the pain and continue to work.”

These were some of the experiences of the participants in terms of working when they were ill. As it can be understood from theses experiences, most of them were not given time to rest when they fell ill and had to continue working. As it can be plainly understood from these stories, the common responses of their employers on those occasions were that of suspicion and disbelief. In addition to this, some employers did not allow the workers to seek medical attention when they were ill. And even if they did, the workers had to pay from their

insufficient earnings. In some rare occasions where the employer paid for the medical expenses, the participants responded that it was deducted from their coming salaries accordingly.

These situations were inferred from the following experiences. ‘Alemnesh’ recounts her employer’s reaction towards her falling ill as:

“As a result of the type of jobs I am assigned to do, I have been sick on a number of occasions. In these cases, it was only once that my employer took me to the hospital and paid for my expenses. I was sick with typhoid fever at one time. But as it turned out, the expenses at that time were deducted from my salary.”

In the same manner, ‘Birké’ shares her story in the following manner:

“I have been sick a couple of times on the job. The employers have never covered the costs and did not take me to the hospital. They didn’t even believe that I was sick. They just assumed that I was pretending to be sick to get out of my responsibilities. So, what most of them did is sending me back to my relatives and it’s the relatives that took me to the hospital and took care of me until I got better. And usually I pay the cost from my own pocket.”

From the experiences of the majority of the participants, it can be deduced that domestic workers are not provided with the necessary health care and rest time during their illnesses. Thus, from these findings, it can be surmised that domestic workers are excluded from the guarantees of a safe and healthy working condition that is afforded to other forms of workers in general.

From the above findings on domestic workers in regards to their relationship with their employers, wages, lodgings, accommodations, working hours, leave periods and health conditions; it can be inferred that the overall living conditions of these workers are very inadequate in nature. This can be construed to the ‘invisible’ nature of the service as well as the lack of relevant legislations that pertain to domestic workers in particular. To this end, liberal feminists analysis of women’ oppression in terms of their social, economic and educational status can be deemed pivotal for the case of women domestic workers so that

these barriers can be eliminated in ensuring their right to equality with other workers. In addition to this, since examination of these workers is done in the Ethiopian context, their situations should also be given emphasis in this context only in which post-modernist and post-colonial feminism's analysis of women's oppression can be beneficial.

4.4. HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES ON DOMESTIC WORKERS

Domestic workers face various forms of human rights abuses as a result of being isolated from other people and subjected to an unregulated type of work. Among these various forms of abuses, the ones found by this research can be categorized in the following manner.

4.4.1. Restrictions on Freedom of Movement and Communication

Most of the participants faced limitations to their freedom of movement due to the nature of the work. This was deduced from the different responses they gave in relation to this issue. Some said that that they were not allowed to leave the confines of their employer's houses other than school hours while others replied that they were strictly prohibited to come into contact with other people outside the family members. There were also some participants who were denied any form of communication with the outside world. They were not permitted to use the phone or to have other people call them in the house.

'Zinash':

"The only time I am allowed to leave the house is when I go to school or when they send me out to get some things. I am not allowed to meet people. They even get mad when I talk to neighbors."

'Serkalem':

"I am not allowed to leave the house because my employer thinks if I go out I will go to the broker looking for an alternative job. I am also not allowed to meet people outside of the house for the same reason that I would leave. Even when I want to call

my relatives I had to do it secretly after making sure that nobody will see that I was out of the house.”

4.4.2. Restrictions on the Right to Practice one’s Faith

This research was able to find out that domestic workers face numerous types of abuses in terms of their right to freely practice their different faiths. This was especially exhibited in terms the Orthodox and Protestant forms of religions. It is a widely known fact that these ideologies have been in controversy in the Ethiopian context for some time now. As a result of this, we can assume that when it comes to the master-servant relationship, the impact on the workers can be catastrophic since the employer can violate the employee’s rights by using their superior economic position. This is best illustrated through the experiences of the domestic workers in terms of their religion.

‘Workitu’:

“In the 1st home I was employed in, my employer used to pressure me to change my religion, forbade me to go to church, and even to make fasting food during the fasting season. During these times I used to go out and buy some bread so that I’ll have something to eat.”

‘Bertkuan’:

“I’m a Protestant by religion. In one home that I was employed in, the employers who were Orthodox used to forbid me to pray, listen to spiritual songs, and going to sermons. As a result of this I had to quit and look for another job.”

4.4.3. Access to Information on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

When asked about women’s health, family planning and safe sexual relationships most of the participants responded that they did not have the requisite knowledge in these areas. Only a few had the knowledge on how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases. When asked if they had access to the media most of them responded that they did not have access and even if they did it’s either not allowed in the household or they don’t have time as

a result of being exhausted from their burdensome tasks. This shows their denial of access to vital information regarding their sexual and reproductive rights.

However, since most of the participants in the research were attending school, a majority of them responded that they were given sex-education classes one time or another during their time in their school. According to the participants, they were given highlights on the transmission of HIV/AIDS and how they can protect themselves against it. Even though these classes were limited to the concept of HIV/AIDS, the participants seem to have gained the essential knowledge towards the disease.

4.4.4. Obstacles to Joining a Union

As it has been mentioned here-in-before, domestic service is regarded as a private form of service devoid of any public interventions. In this kind of institution, the governing bodies are the employers and can subject their employees to any form of treatment that they think fit because of the 'closed door' nature of the work. It was uncovered in this research that, these workers are often denied their day offs and could not attend meetings or any other social events outside their employer's homes and most of the participants in this research also expressed that they were confined to their employer's homes with no form of interaction with other people other than the members of the family. Thus, these instances could be seen a major obstacles in forming unions which could address their common concerns.

Furthermore, from the participants' responses in the focus group discussions it could be inferred that many of the domestic workers were unaware of the plight of their colleagues and thought that they were only exclusively facing them alone. Having once understood that the abuses they were facing were also faced by others in the same manner, almost all of them started to share the different experiences they have encountered in their line of work. They were also found to be unaware of their right of forming a union which could address their concerns and help in the betterment of their lives.

Thus, from the above violations of some fundamental human rights principles, it can be inferred that, domestic workers are not granted their basic entitlements as other individuals.

This is mainly construed to the fact that they are regarded as mere subjects of their employers. In most cases, these workers are bound by 'laws' of household that they are employed in which exacerbates violations of their basic rights in the absence of appropriate bodies and legislations that can protect their rights.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Just as in any other patriarchal society, the Ethiopian society also assigns domestic or reproductive roles to women via its sexual division of labour. This form of division is enshrined in the country's social, cultural and traditional beliefs that hold women in an inferior position delegating them to reproductive and domestic roles only. However, when looking at the conditions of some of the urban areas of the country, most women tend to hold some sort of position in the formal sector thus, relegating their assigned roles to other women who are in a lesser economic position than them- namely women domestic workers.

Despite differences in age, nationality, educational status and religion, domestic workers throughout this research, shared the same basic problems: invisibility, marginalization, and lack of social and legal protection. This was manifested in the types of violence they undergo in their daily lives; the forms of treatment they are awarded by their employers in terms of wages, working hours, leave periods, accommodations, lodgings and their overall health conditions; and the types of human rights violations they endure as a result of the nature of their work.

Domestic workers face various forms of violence in the form of physical, sexual and verbal abuses. As a result of minor mistakes, accidents or non-observance of their employer's instructions they are prone to physical violence exhibited in such acts as: kicking, punching, spitting and throwing of objects. They are also susceptible to sexually harassing acts such as unwanted touching, leering, innuendos which might in some cases escalate to the act of rape or attempted rape. In addition to these forms of abuses, domestic workers also undergo verbal abuse almost everyday of their working lives by their employers and people in their community which often leads to the development of an inferiority complex on the part of the workers.

Furthermore, domestic workers are often outside the ambit of labour legislations in most countries. In Ethiopia also, the rights and duties of domestic workers are not covered in legislations pertaining to 'worker's' rights. This situation exposes domestic workers to adverse conditions of work and employment in terms of wages, working hours, leave periods,

accommodations, lodgings and health conditions. In Ethiopia, domestic workers live with and are under the strict and exclusive control and supervision of their employers. They have to obey the 'laws' of each household which often differs from one another as per the will of employers. In addition to this, they are confined to the household that they are employed in which deters their access to various forms of information that pertain to their rights.

In addition to this, the 'invisible' nature of their work as well as their degraded social and economic status makes them susceptible to some violations of their fundamental human rights. This is manifested in the restrictions they face in terms of movement, practicing their faith, access to sexual and reproductive rights and obstacles in forming a union that can address their common concerns.

As it has been mentioned, these forms of abuses and exploitation of domestic workers can be related to the invisible nature of the domestic service itself. That is, since domestic work is done in the confines of a certain household, it is often wrongly misinterpreted to refer to the private sphere which is only supposed to hold the family and its members in its realm. In this regard, domestic workers are left out from the formal sector of work due to the lack of their incorporation in labour laws legislations. In addition to this, their invisibility can also be construed to their economic dependence on their employers as well as their unawareness of basic rights that pertain to them.

In theoretical aspect, the status of domestic workers has been examined from the liberal, radical, socialist/materialist, psychoanalytic, post-modernist and post-colonial feminist school of thoughts. To this end, liberal feminism's analysis of women's oppression through legal and educational barriers; radical feminism's analysis of patriarchy as the source of women oppression; socialist/materialist feminism's analysis of class and patriarchy as means of subordination of women; and post-modernist feminism's and post-colonial feminism's contribution of the theory of locating women to their surroundings has been pivotal when analyzing the oppressions of these workers.

Finally, based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are forwarded to relevant authorities in the hope of alleviating the overall conditions of domestic workers in the Ethiopian context.

I. The Ministry of Women should:

- Create awareness to the general public about the violence and overall living conditions of women domestic workers through the dissemination of information about their particular situation;
- Conduct, encourage and finance researches on domestic workers both in the rural and urban areas of the country;
- Encourage women skill training programmes and involvement in income generating schemes;
- Advocate and lobby for the enactment of a law pertaining to domestic workers in particular; and
- Promote legal literacy among women in collaboration with other legal authorities so that domestic workers can know the legal rights that pertain to them.

II. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs should:

- Propose the enactment of a law that governs the rights of domestic workers;
- Draft a legal document that covers domestic workers and their rights;
- Ensure that the proposed document contains basic and fundamental benefits like:
 - Clearly defined daily hours of work and rest periods,
 - Clearly defined leave periods,
 - Minimum wages and payment of wages,
 - Precise standards granting decent accommodations and adequate board,
 - Standards on the appointment and termination of employment, and
 - Social security protection
- Incorporate appropriate deterrents for breaches of the law;
- Ensure the establishment of an enforcing body within the proposed legislation that will address domestic workers' specific needs;

- Employ capacity building and awareness raising measures which targets both the employee and employer to inform them of their respective rights and duties; and
- Enlighten the society through the mass media on the importance of domestic work and its contributions for the wellbeing of the family structure.

III. Legal Bodies should:

- Evaluate and review the existing laws that are relevant to the situation of domestic workers and enforce their application;
- Promote legal literacy for women;
- Devise other means of dispute resolution mechanisms to give domestic workers access to fair and transparent legal remedies; and
- Facilitate and support the self-organization of domestic workers.

IV. Regional States should:

- Successively try to address issues that act as main push factors for women to migrate to urban areas;
- Ensure the provision of a standardized form of education in rural areas;
- Increase women's access to resources such as trainings, land and credit; and
- Promote awareness on harmful traditional practices.

V. Individuals should also refrain from subjecting domestic workers to a degrading and demeaning form of treatment in their homes and also try to be engaged in some of the domestic work which guarantees the continuity of their livelihood. Although the immediate illumination of domestic work might hinder the livelihood of the workers, progressive steps should be taken by individuals to take over these assigned roles or employ other people on terms of good and favorable conditions of work.

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