

**Addis Ababa University**

**College of Social Sciences**

**School of Social Work**

**Social Support Experiences of Yemeni Refugee Women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: A  
Descriptive Phenomenological Study**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the School of Social Work in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work and Social  
Development**

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## **Declaration**

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Samuel Amare, titled “Social Support Experiences of Yemeni Refugee Women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study,” submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work and Social Development, complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards concerning originality and quality..

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## Abstract

*Women are recognized as one of the most vulnerable groups of refugees. Refugee women face more adaptation challenges and adverse consequences than refugee men. However, social support could be critical in shielding refugees during their adaptation processes. The general objective of this study was to examine the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study employed a descriptive-phenomenological design to achieve its objective. Thirteen Yemeni refugee women were selected using purposive sampling. A semi-structured interview guide was employed to examine the experiences of refugee women. Using a descriptive phenomenological analysis, the data was analyzed. The study's findings revealed that refugee women encountered economic challenges (limited job opportunities and low or no income, housing problems), identity-related challenges (lack of recognized identity documents, increase in price related to identity), linguistic and socio-cultural challenges (language barriers, social isolation, uncooperative police, cultural differences, and obstacles to education), and gender-related challenges (sexual harassment). These adaptation challenges were detrimental to refugee women's well-being. The study showed that refugee women asked for support from both formal and informal support sources. Refugee women received instrumental support at refugee-serving humanitarian organizations such as financial support, material support (food rations and bedding, hygiene materials, and milk powder), training support (language, computer, technical and vocational), medical and educational allowances, and daycare and other services. Language barriers, lack of availability of knowledge about the support packages, transportation problems, support providers' unfriendly treatment, unmet survival needs, childcare responsibility, failure to give timely responses by support providers, community leaders' biased recruitment to the support provided by humanitarian organizations, and support providers' biased attitude hindered refugee women from accessing social support at refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. Additionally, the study's findings indicated that the support refugee women received from humanitarian organizations working with refugees was inadequate and below their expectations. Moreover, the study's findings indicated that refugee women received various types of social support from family, friends, and independent sponsors, including instrumental support, emotional support, and informational support. Furthermore, the findings indicated that refugee women employed various coping strategies to cope with adaptation challenges in the face of social support deficit. Refugee women dealt with economic challenges using different survival strategies, such as engaging in income-generating activities, selling possessions, marrying local men, and prioritizing spending. The findings also revealed that refugee women employed creative coping strategies, including sending Ethiopian nationals to the shop, taking off the Abaya (Muslim long dress), using essential words from the local language, and using an avoidance strategy to cope with identity-related challenges. Moreover, participating in social gatherings, using language learning and rehearsal strategies, and using virtual communication tools were some of the coping strategies employed by refugee women to cope with linguistic and socio-cultural challenges. Additionally, refugee women used coping strategies such as religious belief, cognitive reappraisal, and venting emotions to cope with various adaptation challenges. The study had implications for the government, refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, local community members, and other concerned bodies to help refugee women have enhanced well-being and thrive instead of merely surviving. The study also had implications for social work education, practice, policy, and research.*

**Key Words:** Social support, Adaptation challenge, Coping, Yemeni refugee women, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

APA American Psychological Association

ARRA Administration for Refugee and Return Affairs

AU African Union

BA Bachelor of Art

BSc Bachelor of Science

CBE Commercial Bank of Ethiopia

CRRF Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

CSA Central Statistical Agency

EOC-DICAC Ethiopian Orthodox Church - Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission

ESSSWA IRB Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers, and Anthropologists  
Institutional Review Board

FDRE Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

IDP Internally Displaced Persons

IDPR Institute of Development and Policy Research

IOM International Organization for Migration

JRS Jesuit Refugee Service

NASW National Association of Social Workers

NGO Non-Governmental Organizations

OAU Organization for African Union

OCP Out of Camp Policy

PTSD Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RRS Refugees and Returnees Services

UN United Nations

UNDESA United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNECA United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UN-Habitat United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

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

Throughout human history, people have been migrating (Manning & Trimmer, 2020). International migrants reached a total of 281 million worldwide in 2022, and nearly 50% of the migrants in this group were women {International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2022}. By the end of 2022, 108.4 million individuals were forced to leave their homes due to intimidation, hostilities, or abuses of human rights, and 35.3 million of them were refugees [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2022a]. The remaining almost 73 million are asylum-seekers, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and stateless persons. Fifty-one percent of all refugees are women and girls (UNHCR, 2022a). The 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defined a refugee as:

A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (p. 14)

Seventy-six percent of refugees worldwide were found in low- and middle-income countries, and 52% of them were from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine by the end of 2022 (UNHCR, 2022a). The top five countries receiving refugees by the end of 2022 were Turkey (3.6 million), Iran (3.4 million), Colombia (2.5 million), Germany (2.1 million), and Pakistan (1.7 million) (UNHCR, 2022a). Africa is both a source of refugees and a destination for them. In

2022, seven million refugees resided in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in particular, 4.7 million refugees resided in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region (UNHCR, 2022a).

Refugees have long been welcomed and hosted in Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2019). The country maintains a policy of opening doors for incoming refugees and providing humanitarian assistance for them (UNHCR, 2020). Ethiopia is a party to both the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and the 1969 Organization for African Union (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (UNHCR, 2020). Based on these regional and global refugee conventions, Ethiopia ratified a national refugee proclamation in 2004 (UNHCR, 2019). The Ethiopian government amended its refugee proclamation in 2019 (UNHCR, 2020). This was done to create an enabling legal environment.

At the beginning of 2023, Ethiopia hosted more than 916,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, which made the country the third-largest refugee-hosting country in Africa next to Uganda and Sudan (UNHCR, 2023a). The proportion of women among Ethiopia's total population of refugees and asylum seekers is 53 percent (UNHCR, 2023a). In 2023, most refugees in Ethiopia were hosted in isolated camps located in rural areas; however, there are also urban areas where refugees reside (UNHCR, 2023b). The capital of the country, Addis Ababa, is home to more than 74,000 urban refugees, and women make up about 55% of the urban refugee population (UNHCR, 2023c).

Refugees and asylum-seekers of many nationalities reside in Addis Ababa. Yemenis are one of the refugee groups (UNHCR, 2023c). Yemen, which borders both the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, has maintained strong ties to the Horn of Africa over many years. Due to persecution in the Arabian Peninsula, Yemenis were among the first Muslims to settle in

Ethiopia (de Regt, 2019). Yemenis moved to the Horn of Africa, as traders and merchants, then as labor migrants (de Regt, 2019).

The outburst of civil war in Yemen in early 2015 between the Yemeni government and Houthi forces is one of the main crises that has contributed to the forced displacement of a large number of Yemeni citizens (UNHCR, 2022b). About 4.5 million people in Yemen have been displaced by the civil war, and women and children make up more than three-quarters of those who have been displaced (UNHCR, 2022b). The Ethiopian government recognizes Yemenis as *prima facie* refugees (UNHCR, 2016). More than 2,400 Yemeni refugees were residing in Addis Ababa, which makes them the second-largest urban refugee group next to Eritreans (UNHCR, 2023c).

Refugees frequently exhibit considerably greater mental health problems than the general population (Van Wyk et al., 2012). This is especially true for refugee women (Iglesias et al., 2003). Women are recognized as one of the most vulnerable groups of refugees (Shishehgar et al., 2017). Refugee women face more adaptation challenges and adverse consequences than refugee men (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018; Phillimore, 2011; Yazid & Natania, 2017). Refugee women have relatively restricted economic opportunities and are susceptible to food insecurity than their counterparts (Bilgili et al., 2017).

For instance, a study conducted among refugees in Ethiopia found that the likelihood of refugee women engaging in wage employment is 15 percentage points lower than that of their male counterparts (World Bank, 2021). The study further indicated that refugees who live in female-headed households are 7.5 percentage points less likely than their counterparts to be employed in the labor market. Another study conducted among forced migrants in Sub-Saharan African countries indicated that in Ethiopia, nearly half of female refugees endure

multidimensional poverty, while just one-quarter of male refugees do (Admasu et al., 2021).

While all refugees experience human rights abuses living in exile, refugee women are especially susceptible to gender-based violence, such as sexual assault (Bartolomei, 2016; UNHCR, 2011).

Emotional problems and poor psychosocial adjustment may result from these challenges (Cislo et al., 2010).

However, literature indicated that social support could be critical in shielding refugees during their adaptation processes (Correa-Velez et al., 2010). Social support is a vital tool that can reduce refugees' challenges (Das & Chan, 2013). According to Berkman et al. (2000), social support is a complex concept with several conceptualizations. However, it is necessary to understand social support in a contextual and culturally specific way (Wachter et al., 2021). Social support is "any process through which social relationships might promote health and well-being"(Cohen et al., 2000, p. 4).

Scholars differentiated social support in terms of perceived or received. According to Sarason et al. (1990), perceived support encompasses both the perceived availability and adequacy of the assistance, whereas received support is the actual supportive behaviors or resources that a person receives (Haber et al., 2007). Social support may be provided by family, friends, neighbors, community members, religious affiliations, and organizations (Lau et al., 2012). Informal networks like friends, family, and ethnic communities, as well as formal networks like those of healthcare and social work professionals, can offer social support (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009). Formal support sources refer to supports that function under organizational structures, while informal support sources refer to individual social networks (Baig & Chang, 2020).

The importance of social support in the promotion and maintenance of well-being has captured the attention of scholars. The two empirical articles reviewed by Cassel and Cobb in 1976 launched the cross-disciplinary field now called social support (Cohen et al., 2000). Cassel tried to dichotomize the various psychosocial factors that affect health from a functionalist perspective: one category as stressors and the other category as protective factors (Cassel, 1976). Cassel's review of human research revealed that social support serves as a protective factor.

On the other hand, Cobb (1976) underscored the buffering effect of social support on life stress instead of its main health effect. Cobb asserted that social support protects the individual from pathological states. Following Cassel's and Cobb's early work on the benefits of social support, many empirical studies have been conducted under the umbrella of social support across populations, such as students, caregivers, older adults, and new mothers. These studies demonstrated that social support and well-being are positively correlated (Faw, 2018; Jibeen, 2016; Tezci et al., 2015).

Specifically in the area of refugees, social support serves as a coping strategy (Baranik et al., 2018; Khawaja et al., 2008). Social support helps refugees cope with various adversaries and is found to be essential for their successful adjustment and sense of belonging (Agbényiga et al., 2012; Anderson et al., 2010; Liamputtong et al., 2016; Rahapsari & Hill, 2019; Richmond & Ross, 2008; Simich et al., 2004), especially in the early phase of re-settlement (Stewart et al., 2008).

In a similar vein, a qualitative study conducted among Chinese immigrants and Somali refugees in Canada revealed that social support from formal and informal sources improved their mental and physical health, helped them find work and meet their basic needs, and decreased their feelings of loneliness and stress (Stewart et al., 2010). In a study of young Middle Eastern

refugees in Australia, social support from family, teachers, the public, churches, and resettlement agencies helped young refugees adjust to life in Australia (Liamputtong & Kurban, 2018).

Furthermore, a qualitative study conducted among Burmese, Bhutanese, and Iraqi refugees in the United States found that stress levels were lower for refugees who received greater support from the resettlement agency than for those who did not (Hauck et al., 2014).

Involvement in social networks may lessen exposure to risk factors like loneliness and increase access to social support for refugees (Ghazinour et al., 2004). Social support is a social determinant of refugees' physical and social health (Simich et al., 2003; Walker et al., 2015) and mental health (Liamputtong & Kurban, 2018; Mitschke et al., 2017; Stewart, 2014; Weine et al., 2014). It promotes refugees' resilience following trauma (Rahapsari & Hill, 2019).

Health is improved by social support. Likewise, being healthy can make it easier to build supportive relationships (Stewart, 2000). For refugees, positive health outcomes are associated with good social support networks (Warner, 2007). On the other hand, inadequate social support may adversely affect the well-being of immigrants and refugees (Simich et al., 2005).

Examining the social support experiences of refugee women is important to ensure that the support they receive is sensitive to refugee women's needs and contributes to their well-being. Prior empirical studies on refugee social support offer the potential to expand our knowledge and inform education, policy, and practice. In contexts like Ethiopia, where there are substantial gaps in knowledge on refugee social support, the knowledge produced on this subject is vital.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Post-migration adaptation challenges increase refugees' support needs and place their well-being at risk (Schweitzer et al., 2006). Studies showed that social support helps to alleviate

some of the challenges associated with settlement in a new environment and has a positive impact on refugees' well-being (Agbényiga et al., 2012; Ajdukovic et al., 2013; Liamputtong et al., 2016; Stewart et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2008).

According to studies focused specifically on refugee women, social support has become an essential factor for smoothing the adaptation process and enhancing the well-being of refugee women. Social support is essential for reducing loneliness, improving mental health outcomes (Killian et al., 2015; Kingsbury et al., 2018), and reducing post-traumatic stress disorder in refugee women (Ryu & Park, 2018).

Access to social support is important to secure one's well-being (Simich et al., 2005). Several environmental and personal factors influence the availability of social support (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010). Studies indicated that refugee women faced language barriers, inadequate knowledge of support programs, insufficient interpreters, transportation challenges, and a lack of culturally-appropriate services in their efforts to access social support (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Rizkalla et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2018; Stewart et al., 2010).

The loss of social support owing to various barriers has detrimental impacts on the well-being (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010) and integration (Simich et al., 2010) of refugees. The changes in social support due to war and displacement affects the health and well-being of refugee women (Wachter & Gulbas, 2018). Stress due to one's inability to access social support may affect psychological and emotional well-being (Hyman & Guruge, 2006). Studies indicated that inadequate support exerted a negative influence on refugees' health. Poor health hurt refugees' ability to seek social support (Stewart et al., 2010; Stewart et al., 2008).

Additional studies indicated that a lack of social support is a source of mental distress (Shrestha-Ranjit et al., 2017) and exacerbates the risks of mental illness for refugees (Hagaman

et al., 2016; O'Mahony & Donnelly, 2013; Puyat, 2013). Compared to men, women are less likely to have the opportunity to build social capital and develop relationships (Hao & Johnson, 2000). In comparison to men, women have been observed to experience greater negative mental health outcomes when there are insufficient social networks (Haines et al., 2008).

Prior studies on refugee social support, including the aforementioned ones, indicated that social support is an essential factor for smoothing the adaptation process of refugees, particularly refugee women. However, refugees faced multiple challenges in their attempts to access social support. This, in turn, has detrimental impacts on the adaptation and well-being of refugees. Specifically, refugee women experienced greater negative mental health outcomes than their counterparts in the face of insufficient social support. While these studies have been valuable, they have had three major limitations.

First, studies on refugee social support fail to address how refugee women deal with adaptation challenges in the face of constrained social support. Some studies indicated that refugees did not have access to support sources that could provide them with the needed support, or the support they received was not sufficient to help them deal with the adaptation challenges (Stewart et al., 2015, 2018). Nevertheless, none of them went further and studied how refugee women cope with adaptation challenges in the face of social support deficit.

Second, prior studies did not reference phenomenology. Existing studies rarely employ the phenomenological approach, which is essential to revealing refugee women's lived experiences with social support. In particular, descriptive phenomenology as a research approach has received little attention in the refugee social support literature. The dominant studies used quantitative methods and conceptualized social support as a mediator, moderator, or independent variable (Goodkind et al., 2014; Ryu & Park, 2018). The studies assessed social support

objectively, without considering subjective lived experience. Some studies employed qualitative approaches other than phenomenology (Chase & Sapkota, 2017; Liamputtong et al., 2016; Stewart et al., 2017). However, these studies did not pay much attention to studying social support through the voices and narratives of refugees' lived experiences.

Third, most of the studies were conducted in high-income countries (Hagaman et al., 2016; Kingsbury et al., 2018; Liamputtong & Kurban, 2018; Xiong et al., 2021). The studies concentrated on forced migrants who were either granted refugee status or resettled in the Global North after leaving the Global South. Thus, they were framed in the context of resettlement and the Global North.

There were also some studies conducted on refugee social support in low- and middle-income countries, specifically in African countries (Gladden, 2013; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011; Seruwagi et al., 2022). Even these studies have not illuminated the importance of social support for the adaptation process of refugee women residing in Ethiopia. Social support operates differently across contexts. Studies indicated that the social support experiences of refugees change in relation to changes in political, cultural, economic, and geographic contexts of their host countries (Agbényiga et al., 2012; Liamputtong et al., 2016; Wachter & Gulbas, 2018). Hence, refugee women are likely to experience social support differently depending on their specific social location. This underscores the need for a context-sensitive understanding of refugee social support in the Ethiopian context.

Though Ethiopia has been a destination for refugees for a long time, the number of refugees arriving in Ethiopia has shown a steady increase over the past decades (UNHCR, 2020). The implication of the rise in the number of refugees arriving from various countries, including the Gulf countries, is becoming a major concern for refugee-serving humanitarian

organizations (UNHCR, 2020). The refugee issue is also emerging as a critical concern for the Ethiopian government, as evidenced by Ethiopia's recent adoption of a new refugee policy with the intent of improving refugee rights and services. While policymakers at the macro level purport to attend to the refugees, at least in official document, empirical studies on refugee social support are limited in the Ethiopian context.

However, there were a few studies conducted on the issue of social support for forced migrants, such as refugees (Getnet et al., 2019) and IDPs (Araya et al., 2007a: 2007b), in Ethiopia. These studies were quantitative and investigated the moderating role of social support on quality of life and mental distress. Refugees' and IDPs' experiences with social support were not given consideration. Specifically, the studies conducted among IDPs focused on perceived social support, which failed to provide information on received social support.

Refugee social support was the subject of investigation in gray literature in Ethiopia (Aida, 2017; Gatwech, 2017; Kidist, 2016). Nevertheless, they emphasized only the type of support refugees received from formal support sources, neglecting the role of support from informal sources for the smooth adaptation process of refugees. Additionally, except for Gatwech (2017), the studies did not prioritize social support as a main research interest. In these studies, social support was inferred inductively from the qualitative data analysis. The lack of such studies in Ethiopia highlights the need to prioritize social support in refugee research. Hence, this study examined the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

## **Research Question**

1. How do Yemeni refugee women experience adaptation challenges in Addis Ababa?
2. What are the lived experiences of social support among Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa?
  - What are the sources of their support?
  - What type of support do they receive from each source of support?
  - How do Yemeni refugee women appraise the support they receive?
3. How do Yemeni refugee women cope with adaptation challenges in the face of social support deficit in Addis Ababa?

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The general objective of the study is to examine the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

- To find out the adaptation challenges that Yemeni refugee women experience in Addis Ababa.
- To explore the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa.
- To identify the coping strategies of Yemeni refugee women to adaptation challenges in the face of a social support deficit.

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The study's findings have several significances. Studying social support from refugee women's perspectives and through their own voices and narratives of lived experience is significant to both theoretical (knowledge) and practical (policy and practice). There is a scarcity

of empirical studies on refugee social support in low- and middle-income countries, which results in a knowledge gap. Studies on refugee social support are confined to developed countries. The study examined the context-specific social support experiences of refugee women in Addis Ababa from their perspective. Thus, the study filled knowledge gaps in the existing refugee social support literature. It also contributes to broadening the body of empirical knowledge. In addition, the study brought a new perspective on how refugee women cope with adaptation challenges in the face of social support deficit.

The findings of the study inform social work education by incorporating empirical study into courses related to refugee social support, such as migration, refugees, and social work practice. The study helps social work instructors by providing context-specific examples relevant to the area of social support issues like source and type of social support and barriers to accessing social support. Students are better equipped to design effective interventions to support refugees when they are exposed to context-specific empirical findings in their refugee-related courses.

Knowing the source, type, and functions of refugee women's support systems is important for support providers to design new support programs or modify existing ones. One of the primary goals of the social work profession is to provide social services for people in need, like refugees [National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2008]. Refugees are a group of the population who face social injustice in their host countries. Addressing social and economic justice issues is social workers ethical responsibility (NASW, 2008). Such interventions should respect refugees' right to self-determination and be aligned with their values (George, 2012). Hence, the study provides information to practitioners on how to design gender-sensitive support programs that respect refugee women's values and specific support needs.

The study is important for crafting and modifying refugee policy. The study contributes to the development of an evidence-based refugee policy that recognizes the views and strengths of refugee women. The study also provides information to policymakers to design policies that address the systemic barriers that refugee women encounter when seeking out social support. The findings of this study could help decision-makers to allocate sufficient funds to address the support needs of refugee women. The findings of the research would generally help policymakers make the required modifications to laws, policies, and programs to better support refugee women.

The study broadens the understanding and knowledge of researchers on refugee social support in Ethiopia. This helps in the development of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in the literature on refugee social support. There is little recognition or visibility of descriptive phenomenology as a social work way of knowing in refugee social support literature. Hence, methodologically, it offers researchers an alternative inquiry that allows them to conduct descriptive phenomenological research on social support. Researchers might use this study as a springboard to investigate social support for other refugee populations in Ethiopia. Lastly, examining social support issues within the Ethiopian context helps in researchers' development of a broader conceptualization of social support.

### **1.5. Delimitations of the Study**

The study's focus was on urban refugees residing in Addis Ababa. This study focused on refugee women, even though urban refugees include men. I chose refugee women because studies indicated that, compared to refugee men, refugee women face more adaptation challenges (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018; Yazid & Natania, 2017), face more difficulties in accessing social

support and experience greater negative mental health outcomes in the face of insufficient social support (Haines et al., 2008).

Appraisal of social support may differ cross-culturally (Leduc & Proulx, 2004; Paris, 2008). Social support may produce differing adaptive results for migrants from different source countries due to cultural differences (Deng & Marlowe, 2013). Social support differs across different cultural groups (Agbényiga et al., 2012; Stewart et al., 2008). Therefore, among the number of refugee ethnic groups, the study was limited to Yemeni refugees. I chose Yemeni refugees for two reasons. First, so far, they were not the primary focus of studies in Ethiopia. Previous studies focused on other refugee ethnic groups, especially refugees from Eritrea and South Sudan. The second reason was their overwhelming numbers. The UNHCR (2023c) report indicated that Yemeni refugees are the second-largest urban refugee group in Addis Ababa, following Eritreans. This underscores the significance of studying this particular group of refugees.

The study's geographical scope was limited to Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa was specifically chosen because of the large number of Yemeni refugee women residing there. For practitioners, policymakers, educators, and researchers, the huge number of refugees from a particular source country in Addis Ababa is an urgent concern.

In terms of content, this study concentrated on adaptation challenges, social support, and coping strategies in the face of social support deficit. Social support can be perceived or received. However, the study focused on received social support because this topic was not the subject of research in most previous refugee social support studies. Additionally, formal and informal support sources were highlighted in the study. Lastly, this study examined social support from the perspective of refugee women.

## 1.6. Basic and Operational Definition of Terms

- **Refugee women:** include all Yemeni women aged 18 and above who had refugee status based on the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.
- **Social support:** refers to “any process through which social relationships might promote health and well-being” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 4).
- **Formal support sources:** support that comes from organizations that function under organizational structures (Baig & Chang, 2020).
- **Informal support sources:** support that comes from refugee women’s social networks, such as family members, friends, and independent sponsors.
- **Adaptation challenges:** are challenges related to economy, identity, language, socio-cultural, and gender that refugee women faced during their stay in Addis Ababa.
- **Coping:** refers to “a person's ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to cope with certain external or internal demands that are deemed to be taxing or surpassing the person's resources” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141).
- **Social support deficit:** constraints on the adequacy, accessibility, and availability of social support.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

The review of literature presents theoretical and empirical literature concerning adaptation challenges, social support, and coping. This review has seven sections. The first section conceptualizes key terms related to refugees. The second section describes the refugee context in Ethiopia. The third section presents definitions, types, and sources of social support. This section includes both recent and prior literature on the topic of social support. The fourth section presents theoretical perspectives that explain the study's findings.

The fifth section presents empirical studies conducted on the issue of refugee adaptation challenges, social support, and coping. In this section, I incorporated study results for both genders due to the paucity of studies specifically focused on refugee women. I also used study results about immigrants and IDPs. Based on the specific objectives of the study, empirical studies were presented. Section six indicates the empirical literature gaps. The last section indicates the conceptual framework for refugee social support.

#### **2.1. Conceptualizing Key Terms**

The issue of refugees is not a newly emerging issue. Before the 1648 Peace of Westphalia and the early modern state structure, the term "refugee" was used broadly to describe anyone seeking safety from political or religious persecution (Betts & Loescher, 2011). A legal definition of a refugee was given in the formal regime of the twentieth century, particularly in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. According to Article 1A (2) of the UN Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person:

...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence as a result of such events is unable or, owing to such fears unwilling to return to it. (p. 14)

Since the early 1950s, the term refugee has been extended to include people in different situations who need assistance (Betts & Loescher, 2011). The 1951 UN Refugee Convention limited the definition to anyone who was a refugee because of events that occurred in Europe before 1951. In 1967, the UN protocol extended the definition of refugee to include all people who have fled their homeland owing to a well-founded fear of persecution.

The expansion of the term refugee occurred at the regional level, specifically in Africa in 1969. The Organization for African Union (OAU) challenged the narrow and legal definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention and came up with a more comprehensive conception of refugees. Any person who falls under the UN Refugee Convention is included in the OAU Refugee Convention. In addition, any person who has been seriously disturbed by public order events (e.g., civil strife, general violence, and famine) is included in the definition. The actual implementation of this convention is a crucial challenge and deserves international assistance (Martín & Bonfanti, 2015). According to Art 1(2) of the OAU Refugee Convention, the term refugee:

...shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part [or] the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality. (p.2)

In Ethiopia, according to refugee proclamation No.1110/2019, "refugee" means any person who fulfills the criteria under the provisions of Article 5 or Article 21 of this proclamation" (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019, p.3), Article 5 of the refugee proclamation states that any person shall be considered as a refugee where:

a) Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion he is outside his country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling, to avail himself of the protection of that country; b) not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, he is unable, or owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, he is unwilling to return to it; or c) owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, he is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality. (p.4)

There are some refugee-like individuals from legal perspective. The first one is an immigrant. "An immigrant is a person who moves into a country other than that of his or her nationality or usual residence so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her

new country of usual residence” [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 1998, p.10]. While immigrants leave their homelands voluntarily in pursuit of better economic possibilities, access to work and education, or to be reunited with family, refugees are forced from their countries due to persecution and human rights violations against them (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002).

The second one is that of an asylum seeker. “An asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it” (UNHCR, 2006, p.4). An individual seeking asylum is someone who submits an application and is waiting for a determination on the application for refugee status under appropriate international and national arguments (IOM, 2024). The third is that of IDPs. The UN Commission on Human Rights (1998) defined IDPs:

...persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. (p.5)

These people have not fled their home countries, even though they may have been forced to flee their homes and suffer from the same violations of human rights as refugees. As a result, they are not regarded as refugees (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). The fourth and last one is that of a stateless person. Article 1 of the UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons states that the term stateless person means “a person who is not considered a national by any state under the operation of its law” (UN, 1954, p.1).

In general, the literature makes a distinction between refugees and those who are like refugees, including immigrants, stateless persons, IDPs, and asylum seekers. This study focused solely on refugees. It did not look at immigrants, stateless persons, IDPs, or asylum seekers.

## **2.2. Refugee Context in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is the third-largest refugee-hosting country in Africa at the beginning of 2023 (UNHCR, 2023a). The country provides protection to refugees from various countries (UNHCR, 2023b). Ethiopia provides prima facie recognition to Eritreans, South Sudanese, Sudanese, Yemenis, and Somalis originating from South and Central Somalia (UNHCR, 2020). Asylum seekers who come from other countries undergo individual refugee status determination by the Ethiopian government (UNHCR, 2020).

At the beginning of 2023, the nation hosted 916,436 refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2023a). Among them, 416,308 (45%) originate from South Sudan; 276,412 (30%) come from Somalia; 165,450 (18%) from Eritrea; 49,184 (5%) from Sudan; 2,448 from Yemen; and the remaining 6,634 from other countries.

In Ethiopia, refugees are required to reside in camps, except for a small group of urban refugees, including Out-of-Camp Policy (OCP) beneficiaries, university students, refugees who have reasons for security and access to medical care, and those who have no camp designated for them (Tsion, 2018). Specifically, 74,353 urban refugees are living in Addis Ababa (UNHCR, 2023c). Of these, 68,447 (92%) came from Eritrea, 2,448 (3%) from Yemen, 1032 from Somalia, 668 from South Sudan, and the rest (1,777) from other countries. Altogether, refugees living in Addis Ababa came from 28 different countries (UNHCR, 2023c).

In 2004, Ethiopia enacted the first national refugee proclamation, No. 409/2004, based on the international and regional conventions relating to refugees (UNHCR, 2019). Before

2004, Ethiopia had neither national policies nor rules that regulated refugees' and asylum seekers' situations, despite Ethiopia being a haven for refugees and asylum seekers (Zelalem, 2017). The 2004 refugee proclamation prohibits refugees from having the right to work, access to justice, banking and telecommunication services, and the acquisition and transfer of properties (Bariagaber, 2016).

In 2019, Ethiopia revised its refugee proclamation No.409/2004, granting more rights to refugees (UNHCR, 2020). The newly adopted refugee proclamation incorporates both the definitions set by the UN and OAU refugee conventions. The new proclamation is one of the most progressive refugee proclamations in Africa (UNHCR, 2020). The proclamation grants refugees the right to movement, access to health, education, justice, banking, and telecommunication; the right to employment, acquisition, and transfer of property; a driver's qualification certification license; identity papers and travel documents; and registration of vital events (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019).

In 2016, Ethiopia co-hosted the Leaders' Summit for Refugees and Migrants at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, where it made nine pledges to improve the lives and livelihoods of refugees and host communities in the country (UN, 2016). The pledges include providing work permits to qualified refugees; facilitating local integration for refugees who are in protracted situations; allocating a percentage of jobs in industrial parks; providing access to irrigable land; expanding the OCP to benefit 10% of the total refugees; increasing enrollment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education and access to health services; and providing access to vital event registration [Administration for Refugee & Returnee Affairs (ARRA), 2018].

According to the commitments made at the September 2016 Leaders' Summit on Refugees and Migrants in New York, Ethiopia has made efforts to incorporate refugees into its national development goals (ARRA, 2018). The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) was established as a result of the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (Tsion, 2018). The primary objectives of the CRRF are to accomplish four essential goals. The measures aim to alleviate the burden on countries that receive and accommodate refugees, enhance the self-sufficiency of refugees, increase opportunities for resettlement in other countries, and create conditions that encourage refugees to return to their home countries willingly (UNHCR, 2018).

### **2.3. Conceptualizing Social Support**

Social support is conceptualized based on definitions, types, and sources described below.

#### **2.3.1. Definition of Social Support**

Social support has been conceptualized by scholars in various ways. For example, Cobb (1976) conceptualized social support as “the individual belief that one is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligations” (p. 300). Cobb’s definition was one of the first attempts to systematically conceptualize and operationalize the construct. According to this definition, the key terms used to describe social support are being cared for or loved, being esteemed or valued, and social networks. This definition is only limited to information resulting in a feeling of being loved, which is the emotional aspect of social support. The definition also includes the idea of mutuality. The definition conceives social support as a single psychological construct and tries to capture an individual’s perception and appraisal of social support.

Thoits (1982) defined social support as “provisions from social relationships that meet instrumental or emotional needs” (p. 146). It incorporated the two resources that help individuals cope with stressful demands. Moreover, Cohen and Syme (1985) defined social support as “the resources provided by other persons. By viewing social support in terms of resources, potentially useful information or things” (p. 4). The definition limits social support to information and material items or goods.

A definition provided by Cohen and colleagues (2000) refers to social support as “any process through which social relationships might promote health and well-being” (p. 4). This definition reflects the functionalist framing of social support, which relates social support to its consequences. Stewart and Langille (2000) conceptualized social support as “interactions with family members, friends, peers, and professionals that function to communicate information, affirmation, practical aid, or understanding” (p. 126). Moreover, Wachter and Gulbas (2018) defined social support in such a way that “support is available through functioning social networks” (p. 108). Furthermore, Walker and colleagues (2015) conceptualized social support as “the interpersonal interactions that provide practical and emotional resources” (p. 326).

House (1981) defined social support as “an interpersonal transaction involving one or more of the following: (1) emotional concern (liking, love, empathy), (2) instrumental aid (goods or services), (3) information (about the environment), or (4) appraisal (information relevant to self-evaluation) (p. 39). Social support is also conceptualized as perceived and received. Perceived support refers to the individual's perception of the availability of varied types of support from network associates, whereas received support refers to reports about the types of support actually received (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010).

From this review, one can understand that conceptualizing social support is not a straightforward task. Despite the different conceptualizations of social support, the common element among the above definitions is that they emphasize the assisting nature of social support. For this study, the definition by Cohen et al. (2000) is adopted. This definition is comprehensive and includes both formal and informal support sources that refugee women rely on for support.

### **2.3.2. Types of Social Support**

A number of classification schemas have been developed by scholars for classifying the types of social support. For example, Gottlieb (1978) classified the support type into four broad categories: problem-solving behaviors, emotionally supportive behaviors, indirect personal influence, and environmental action. Pattison (1977) distinguished between instrumental and affective forms of support. While affective support includes things like emotional support, social reinforcement, acknowledgment, and esteem development, instrumental support deals with more concrete types of support like material aid and financial assistance. Barrera and Ainlay (1983) divided social support into six categories: material aid, behavioral assistance, intimate interaction, guidance, feedback, and positive social interaction.

According to House (1981), any type of support falls into one of four categories: emotional (love, empathy, caring, and trust), instrumental (involves the provision of goods or services), informational (providing information for problem-solving), or appraisal (involves the provision of information for self-evaluation). Each form of support is crucial to the wellness and general well-being of the person receiving it.

The above classification indicated that social support can take various forms and can be identified in different contexts. In addition to varying conceptualizations, social support can be categorized in various ways. Among these classification schemas, I adopted House's (1981)

typology of social support as it works in the context of Yemeni refugee women's social support experiences in Addis Ababa. Additionally, the classification includes the type of social support received by my study participants. However, I did not use appraisal social support as the study participants did not have experience with it.

### **2.3.3. Sources of Social Support**

Social support can be derived from many different sources, including family, friends, significant others, organizations, the co-ethnic community, independent sponsors, and neighbors. The literature classified sources of social support largely into two categories: formal and informal. Support from individuals and groups within organizational contexts is referred to as formal support sources, whereas support from family, friends, and neighbors is considered informal support sources (Guruge et al., 2015; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009). When one source of support is lacking, it is compensated for by support from other sources (Feldman et al., 1988).

## **2.4. Theoretical Perspectives**

The theories that explain the study's findings were social network, social capital, intersectionality, and stress and coping.

### **2.4.1. Social Network**

A social network is "a network of individuals and organizations that are tied together by different sorts of relationships, such as friendship, economic exchange, influence, and common interests" (Bartram et al., 2014, p. 95). It is the web of social relationships that surrounds individuals (Heaney & Israel, 2008). Social networks begin with families and extend to friends, peers, acquaintances, and professional contacts (Hanley et al., 2018).

Sharing geography, gender, religion, race, and class with others is important for forming social networks (Pittaway et al., 2016). However, one should not assume that simply because an

individual shares certain characteristics with others, they are necessarily networked with them (Ryan et al., 2008). Having access to some form of social network is important for accessing social support (Hanley et al., 2018).

In the context of refugees, social networks influence the decisions refugees make about when to leave their home countries and where to target as a destination for asylum (Klavnova, 2009). In the destination countries, social networks like family and friends are the source of information for refugees on a number of issues, such as learning about available support programs, employment, and housing (Hanley et al., 2018; Hynie et al., 2011; Olukotun et al., 2019), sharing everyday information, the sustained transmission of cultural values, and a link for language acquisition (Goodall et al., 2014).

Social networks are also important in terms of providing emotional (Chase & Sapkota, 2017; Liamputtong et al., 2016) and instrumental (Maung et al., 2021; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011) support for refugees. Refugees' social networks matter for accessing various forms of social support. Hence, Yemeni refugee women residing in Addis Ababa may depend on their social networks to receive instrumental, emotional, and informational support from formal and informal sources.

#### **2.4.2. Social Capital**

Social capital can be defined as “resources embedded in one’s social networks, resources that can be accessed or mobilized through ties in the networks” (Lin, 2001, p.4). The structure of relationships between people involves social capital (Coleman, 1988). There are three types of social capital: bonding capital, bridging capital and linking capital. “Bonding ties are to people who are like you in some important way, whereas bridging ties are to people who importantly are

unlike you” (Putnam, 2007, p.143). Individuals' interactions with various kinds of organizations serve as the foundation for linking social capital (Putnam, 1995).

In other words, social capital theory states that bonding is most likely to occur with individuals who share similar characteristics, whereas bridging occurs in individuals who do not share similar characteristics. In the case of refugees, this classification can be used to create a distinction between co-ethnics and locals (Ryan, 2016).

A wide range of factors influence the advantages that one obtains from social capital, such as gender, age, social status, education, nationality, and religion (Nasr & Hilal, 2007). In the context of refugees, refugees mobilized their social networks into social capital when they faced adaptation challenges such as economic challenges, unemployment, social isolation, or health problems. Thus, the theory of social capital explains refugee women’s access to and sources of social support.

### **2.4.3. Intersectionality**

The American critical legal scholar, Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, coined the word intersectionality in 1989 (Hankivsky, 2014). During this time, intersectionality has been conceived as a theory, methodology, lens, or framework by scholars. A wide range of disciplines have used the term intersectionality, especially the social sciences. About this, intersectionality has no single definition. Hankivsky (2014) defined intersectionality in such a way that

Intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., ‘race ’/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems

and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments, and other political and economic unions, religious institutions, media). Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism, and patriarchy are created. (p. 2)

Intersectionality focuses on the various interacting contexts (e.g., social, economic, cultural, and political) that affect human lives (Hankivsky, 2014). Refugee women are positioned in the sociocultural, economic, and political contexts of Ethiopia. Particularly, Yemeni refugee women are placed within different categories in terms of migration status, skin color, gender, religion, and others (e.g., refugees, women, Muslims, Arabs). These interrelated factors may increase their vulnerability and social support needs.

Moreover, intersectionality theory helps to look at how these intersecting factors affect refugee women's adaptation challenges and access to social support in Addis Ababa. According to this theory, social support interventions for refugee women should be designed to understand intersecting factors in addressing their social support needs and access to social support, instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach.

#### **2.4.4. Stress and Coping**

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) discussed their Transactional Model of Stress and Coping in terms of relations between stressful person-environment encounters and outcomes. According to the theory, cognitive appraisal and coping mediate stress and outcomes. Cognitive appraisal is the subjective evaluation of the event.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) divided cognitive appraisal into two categories: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. In the primary appraisal, a person experiencing stress assesses

if an event has potential harm, threat, or benefit for his or her well-being. In secondary appraisal, the person judges the actions to be taken to prevent or overcome potential harms or threats or to improve benefits. In secondary appraisal, the person evaluates the coping strategies that he or she can use.

Coping is a process that involves constant changes in cognitive and behavioral efforts aimed at dealing with a situation or condition appraised as exceeding personal resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping strategies can be divided into two categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping directly deals with the source of stress, while emotion-focused coping focuses on the regulation of stressful emotions. Coping strategies that are effective in one circumstance may be ineffective in another. Coping is a process that changes over time and in the context of a situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Refugee women may face multiple stressors in their process of adaptation to the new environment. These stressors may affect their well-being. To deal with these stressors, refugee women may use different kinds of coping strategies. Therefore, the theory of stress and coping explains how Yemeni refugee women deal with adaptation challenges in the face of social support deficit.

## **2.5. Empirical Studies**

Reviewing empirical studies on refugee adaptation challenges, social support, and coping strategies was the focus of the study.

### **2.5.1. Empirical Studies on Adaptation Challenges of Refugees**

I reviewed empirical studies conducted on adaptation challenges that refugee women encounter in their host countries. The review indicated that refugee women faced multiple interrelated challenges. Some of these were:

**Language barriers.** Previous studies indicated that language is the major adaptation challenge for refugee women in their host countries (Huot et al., 2021; Owino, 2015; Parajuli et al., 2019; Qutranji et al., 2020; Watkins et al., 2012). The language barrier impacted various domains of refugee women's lives. Studies done in Ethiopia with Eritrean refugees (Aida, 2017) and the Great Lakes Region (Suleyman, 2014) revealed that refugees had difficulties socially integrating with the local community because of language barriers.

**Limited job opportunities and income.** Prior studies found that refugee women had difficulty finding employment and earning money in their host countries (Dodson, 2018; Freedman et al., 2020; Kavian et al., 2020; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011; Vromans et al., 2018). Studies carried out in Ethiopia also showed that Eritrean refugees had limited access to activities that generated income and were unable to acquire a means of subsistence (Samuel Hall, 2014; Tufa et al., 2021).

The limited job opportunities for refugee women could be attributed to refugee status (Idemudia et al., 2013), and language difficulty (Huot et al., 2021). Lack of work permits and business capital is another risk factor for refugee women's limited job opportunities. A study conducted among refugee women in Addis Ababa found that refugees faced limited job opportunities because of a lack of work permits and business capital (Jemal, 2020).

The limited job opportunities had an array of impacts on the lives of refugee women, resulting in psychological problems like distress and a feeling of hopelessness. A study

conducted among refugees in Australia indicated that unemployment and a lack of work opportunities contributed to symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and psychological distress (Garton et al., 2022).

Limited employment opportunities also led to limited earnings. A qualitative study conducted among refugees in Greece found that the limited incomes of refugee women impacted their ability to meet basic needs (Diamond, 2019). The limited job opportunities impacted refugee women's economic integration. A study conducted among refugees in Austria indicated that the lack of initial capital for self-employment was a barrier to the labor market integration of refugees (Ortlieb et al., 2020).

**Housing problem.** Housing is one of the most basic human needs. However, several studies carried out found that refugee women had housing problems in their host countries (Kandasamy et al., 2014; Miketta, 2014; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011; Walsh et al., 2016).

Likewise, a qualitative study conducted among Congolese refugees in Addis Ababa found that refugees faced a house rent problem (Gelila, 2019).

The housing problem was compounded for refugee women because of different factors. Kaur and colleagues (2021) conducted a systematic review of qualitative studies and found that poor access to housing services was related to insufficient income assistance, immigration status, limited employment opportunities, and a lack of language skills. Additionally, a study conducted among refugees in Australia found that the lack of affordability of housing was compounded because of widespread discrimination (Flatau, 2015).

**Obstacles to education.** Studies on the obstacles to refugee women's education are scant. However, studies on both genders revealed that refugees faced many obstacles to education in their host countries. Language is one of the barriers that prevented refugees from

pursuing education. Previous studies conducted among refugees indicated that language was a barrier to refugees' education (Avery & Said, 2017; Kek & Huijser, 2011; Streitwieser et al., 2017).

Similarly, a study conducted among Karen refugees in Australia revealed that the biggest issue harming their well-being is their inability to communicate and speak the local language (English) fluently (Watkins et al., 2012). Additionally, a study conducted among Sudanese refugees in Australia indicated that refugees faced significant language challenges while trying to access educational opportunities (Kek & Huijser, 2011). Moreover, a study conducted among Syrian refugees in Turkey showed that language was considered to be the biggest obstacle to refugees' educational and social integration (Ibesh et al., 2021).

Limited income was another obstacle to refugees' education. Studies carried out in host countries indicated that one of the major obstacles to education for refugees was limited income (Buckner et al., 2017; Ibesh et al., 2021; Shamieh et al., 2022; Tulibaleka, 2022). Particularly, studies conducted in Ethiopia revealed that economic issues constitute a barrier to the education of Eritrean and Somali refugees (Redeit, 2015; Yared, 2020).

Other barriers to education faced by refugees were feelings of alienation, the unavailability of educational facilities, and the like. For example, a study conducted among Arab refugee students in Germany found that refugees faced challenges to education, including rigid access policies and procedures, unwelcoming public discourse, and feelings of alienation (Arar, 2021). A survey study conducted among refugee families in Jordan found that refugees faced obstacles to education, such as the unavailability of educational facilities, the quality of available education, exposure to bullying, the feeling of alienation, and distance from their homeland (Shamieh et al., 2022).

**Sexual harassment.** Existing studies indicated that refugee women faced sexual harassment both within and outside of refugee camps in their host countries (Al-Shar & Al-Tarawneh, 2019; Freedman et al., 2020; Gelila, 2019; Krause, 2020; Kwiringira et al., 2018; Lalla et al., 2020; Mwangi, 2012). Similarly, a study conducted among refugee women in Kenya indicated that women and girls experienced sexual harassment in the Dadaab camp (Hossain et al., 2018). The study further indicated that 39% of women who sought case management services from GBV centers said they had been victims of non-partner sexual violence.

Furthermore, a qualitative study conducted among Congolese refugee women in Addis Ababa found that refugee women faced sexual harassment and sexual violence in Addis Ababa (Gelila, 2019). Additionally, a qualitative study conducted among Eritrean refugee women in the Mai Ayni refugee camp in Ethiopia revealed that refugee women in the camp were exposed to sexual violence (Yonas, 2013). The study also showed that the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against female refugees were their intimate partners and male counterparts.

**Childcare.** Previous studies found that taking care of children impacted refugee women's employment opportunities (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009; DeSouza, 2011), ability to participate in and continue in education (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Namak et al., 2022; Senthanaar et al., 2020), and access to healthcare services (Caulford & Rahunathan, 2019). For example, a qualitative study conducted among refugee women in the United States revealed that one of the challenges faced by refugee women in the United States was taking care of their children. The study also showed that refugee women's responsibilities to care for their children had a detrimental impact on their employment prospects (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009).

**Social isolation.** Being separated from family members, relatives, and friends caused refugee women to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation. Several studies indicated that

refugee women faced social isolation in their destination countries (Evans et al., 2022; Kandasamy et al., 2014; Mangrio et al., 2019; Olukotun et al., 2019; J. Owino & Weber, 2020; Parajuli et al., 2019; Qutranji et al., 2020; Saksena & McMorrow, 2021; Vromans et al., 2018) .

In a similar vein, a qualitative study conducted among Sudanese and Zimbabwean refugee women in Canada revealed that refugee women experienced loneliness both before and after giving birth (Stewart et al., 2015). Their diminished social networks resulted in a feeling of loneliness. Furthermore, a study conducted among Eritrean refugees residing in camps in Ethiopia revealed that refugees faced a high degree of social isolation (Samuel Hall, 2014).

There are several factors responsible for refugee women's feelings of social isolation. Previous studies found that social isolation among refugee women in host countries was a result of cultural differences in customs and traditions (Al-Shar & Al-Tarawneh, 2019), language barriers, and acculturative stress (Stewart, 2014).

**Gender based role.** The other adaptation challenge that refugee women faced in their host countries was the role of women. Earlier studies indicated that when they move to Western countries, refugee women and immigrants suffer from having to manage both caring for the home and working to support the household financially (Phillimore, 2011; Pooremamali et al., 2015; Stewart et al., 2015). For instance, a qualitative study conducted among refugees from Africa in Canada indicated that since moving to Canada, refugee women have been burdened with two loads of work: one at home and one outside the house, due to financial constraints (Stewart et al., 2015).

**Cultural differences.** Concerning cultural variations, prior studies indicated that refugees faced different cultures and ways of life in their host countries (Almohamed & Vyas, 2016; Gurer, 2019; M. Stewart et al., 2015). Likewise, a qualitative study conducted among

South Sudanese unaccompanied refugee children in Jewi Refugee Camp in Ethiopia indicated that refugee children experienced a different culture and way of life from the local community (Gatwech, 2017).

### **2.5.2. Empirical Studies on Refugee Social Support**

Studies indicated that social support is essential in the early phases of refugees' adjustment. For example, qualitative studies conducted among Chinese immigrants and Somali refugees in Canada revealed that social support from formal and informal sources lowered feelings of isolation and stress, made it easier for them to find work and satisfy their basic needs, and improved their physical and mental health (Stewart et al., 2010; Stewart et al., 2008). In the same studies, inadequate support led to poor health. Seeking social support was negatively impacted by poor health. Similarly, in a study of young Middle Eastern refugees in Australia, social support from family, teachers, the public, churches, and resettlement agencies helped young refugees adjust to life in Australia (Liamputtong & Kurban, 2018).

Furthermore, a study conducted among Bhutanese refugees in the United States found that a lack of resettlement services and social support was one of the contributing factors to suicidal acts (Hagaman et al., 2016). Another study with immigrants in Canada found that having low social support negatively affected the mental health of immigrants (Puyat, 2013). Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among Bhutanese refugees in New Zealand found that refugees' mental health status had deteriorated due to various factors, including a lack of social support networks (Shrestha-Ranjit et al., 2017). Moreover, a quantitative study conducted among Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia showed that the impact of post-migration living difficulties on depressive symptoms was moderated by social support (Getnet et al., 2019).

Social support mitigates stress related to refugee experiences and plays an important role during pregnancy. Studies conducted among Bhutanese refugee women in the United States found that social support played a critical role in reducing isolation, facilitating access to healthcare, and improving mental health outcomes for refugee women during pregnancy (Kingsbury et al., 2018; 2019). In a similar vein, in a study of immigrant and refugee women in Canada, social support from both formal and informal sources helped immigrant and refugee women cope with postpartum depression (O'Mahony et al., 2012).

Social support is also important for group-based mental health interventions. A qualitative study conducted among resettled refugees in the United States revealed that participating in a mental health support group with their peers helped refugees reduce feelings of social isolation (Mitschke et al., 2017).

#### **2.5.2.1. Formal Support Sources**

The role of formal support sources in enhancing refugees' well-being is documented by some studies. For example, a qualitative study conducted among Burmese, Bhutanese, and Iraqi refugees in the United States found that stress levels were lower for refugees who received greater support from the resettlement agency than for those who did not (Hauck et al., 2014). Similarly, in a study aimed at identifying support needs of refugee new parents in Canada, participants received social support from refugee-serving agencies and churches that assisted them in settling (Stewart et al., 2017).

Moreover, a qualitative study conducted among Sudanese refugee women in Kenya indicated that refugee women coped with adaptation challenges using support from UNHCR (Gladden, 2013). The study also indicated that refugee women expressed dissatisfaction with the quantity of food provided by the UNHCR. Furthermore, studies indicated that formal support

sources helped refugees overcome some adaptation challenges in their host countries (Maung et al., 2021; Ryu & Park, 2018). In a similar vein, studies conducted among refugees from Zimbabwe and Sudan documented that formal social support sources assisted refugees in coping with stressful situations (Stewart et al., 2015, 2018).

Social support from formal support sources promotes resilience following trauma. For example, a qualitative study conducted among Burmese refugees in the United States indicated that throughout the first six months of their resettlement process, refugees were able to survive due to the various services offered by the resettlement agency, including paying bills and rent for their houses, helping them with paperwork, teaching them a language, teaching them money management skills, assisting them in accessing healthcare, medical screening, local clinics, and hospitals, and assisting them in finding employment (Rahapsari & Hill, 2019).

A qualitative study conducted among South Sudanese unaccompanied refugee children in a Jewi refugee camp in Ethiopia indicated that the various kinds of services (educational, basic, and health) that unaccompanied refugee children received from humanitarian organizations helped them cope with adaptation challenges (Gatwech, 2017). Furthermore, a qualitative study conducted among OCP beneficiaries of Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa revealed that governmental and non-governmental organizations provided refugees with a range of supports, including health care, education, food subsidies, housing subsidies, and training support, to help them adjust to life in the city (Aida, 2017).

Refugee women encountered many barriers when attempting to obtain social support from formal support sources. I have listed a few of the barriers below.

**Language barriers.** Refugee women face difficulties communicating in the local language with support providers. According to previous studies (Bains et al., 2021; Jiwrajka et

al., 2017; Kim et al., 2017; Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019; Nara et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2018), refugee women face barriers when trying to access health services in host countries due to their difficulty with understanding the local language.

Likewise, a qualitative study conducted among Sudanese and Zimbabwean refugee women in Canada indicated that refugee women faced language barriers in their attempts to access health-related services (Stewart et al., 2015). In addition, a qualitative study conducted among urban refugees in Kenya documented that language was one of the barriers to accessing healthcare in Nairobi (Arnold et al., 2014). Furthermore, a qualitative study conducted among refugee children in Addis Ababa indicated that refugee children faced language barriers while they were trying to receive services at humanitarian organizations (Barkeal, 2021).

**Lack of knowledge about the available support packages.** Information about the existing support packages offered by support providing organizations may not be available for refugee women. Previous studies indicated that refugee women were not aware of the available support provided by support-provider organizations due to a lack of information (Fellin et al., 2013; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Habersack et al., 2011; Henry et al., 2020; O'Mahony et al., 2012; Qutranji et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2018; Stewart et al., 2010).

Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among Sudanese and Somali refugees in Canada found that refugees did not participate in the support program due to a lack of knowledge of available sources (Makwarimba et al., 2013). Moreover, a qualitative study conducted among refugee women in Addis Ababa revealed that refugee women were unaware of their rights to health care services due to a lack of information (Hiba, 2018). The study further indicated that language barriers compounded refugee women's lack of information. Furthermore, a qualitative study conducted among Eritrean refugee women in Addis Ababa indicated that refugee women

encountered a lack of information about the support provided by humanitarian organizations. (Kidist, 2016).

**Transportation problems.** Prior studies showed that because of the high cost of transportation, refugee women were unable to get some form of support from service-provider organizations. For instance, a qualitative study among Congolese refugee women in the United States revealed that refugee women faced transportation problems as one of the barriers to accessing healthcare services (McMorrow & Saksena, 2017). In a similar vein, a study conducted among Zimbabwean and Sudanese refugees in Canada found that refugee new parents faced transportation problems while they tried to access childbearing and parenting programs (Stewart et al., 2017).

**Failure to give timely responses by support providers.** Studies indicated that support providers' failure to give timely responses is another barrier for refugees trying to accessing support from formal sources (Stewart et al., 2010; Stewart et al., 2008). For instance, a study conducted among refugees and immigrants in Canada revealed that because of the bureaucratic restrictions imposed by service providers, newcomers' support needs were unmet (Stewart et al., 2008).

**Childcare responsibility.** Childcare responsibility is another factor limiting refugee women's access to support at support-provider organizations. Prior studies indicated that childcare responsibility affected refugee women's access to healthcare services (Caulford & Rahunathan, 2019), and their ability to engage in education (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Namak et al., 2022; Senthanar et al., 2020).

**A biased attitude among support providers.** The other barrier that limits refugee women from accessing social support at support-provider organizations is a biased attitude

among support providers. Studies indicated that refugee women faced discriminatory practices based on race when accessing social support in their host countries (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Schmidt et al., 2018). Similarly, a study conducted among refugee women in the Republic of South Africa indicated that refugee women encountered many obstacles when attempting to access reproductive health services in public healthcare institutions, including medical xenophobia and discrimination (Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019). Support providers' unfriendly treatment is another barrier for refugees in accessing support from support-provider organizations. Existing studies indicated that support providers' unfriendly treatment is one of the barriers for refugee women to accessing social services at formal support sources (Freedman et al., 2020; Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019; Nara et al., 2020; Rizkalla et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2018).

#### **2.5.2.2. Informal Support Sources**

The process of adjustment among refugees in their new countries requires a variety of support from informal sources. One of the supports is instrumental support. Studies indicated that instrumental support from family plays a pivotal role in the adaptation process of refugees (Ajdukovic et al., 2013; Hynie et al., 2011). Likewise, a study conducted among Hmong, Syrian, and Somali refugees in the United States indicated that the financial, instrumental, and educational support from family members helped them to adjust to their host country (Xiong et al., 2021). Furthermore, previous studies revealed that friends provide refugees with instrumental support that improves their well-being (Hynie et al., 2011; Liamputtong et al., 2016; Maung et al., 2021; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011).

Another type of support was emotional support. The emotional support that emanates from informal support sources helped refugees deal with adaptation challenges. According to

prior studies, family's emotional support enabled refugees to overcome challenges, served as a buffer for their mental health, and helped them settle into their new countries (Arnetz et al., 2013; Atari-Khan et al., 2021; Goodman et al., 2017; Hynie et al., 2011; Löbel, 2020; Tingvold et al., 2012; Weine et al., 2014; Xiong et al., 2021). In a similar vein, a qualitative study among Bhutanese refugees in the United States and Nepal revealed that emotional support from family members appeared to play a central role in the management of distress (Chase & Sapkota, 2017).

According to prior studies, friends are also the source of emotional support for refugees during their adaptation process (Chase & Sapkota, 2017; Hynie et al., 2011; Olukotun et al., 2019; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011). Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among refugee women in Australia revealed that the emotional support refugee women received from their peers enabled them to deal with a variety of adversaries (Liamputtong et al., 2016).

The other type of support was informational support. Social support from family members and friends helped refugees in terms of employment and housing. A study conducted among Syrian refugees in Canada revealed that the informational support of friends and family enabled refugees to find employment and housing (Hanley et al., 2018). Prior studies indicated that family is the primary source of informational support for refugees in their destination countries (Hynie et al., 2011; Xiong et al., 2021). In a similar vein, a qualitative study among Syrian refugees in Canada revealed that family members play a major role in teaching and providing information to refugees about Canada's health system, including mental health services (Mahajan et al., 2022).

In addition, studies revealed that friends serve as a source of informational support for refugees in their host countries (Hynie et al., 2011; Olukotun et al., 2019). A qualitative study conducted among immigrants and refugees in Canada revealed that newly resettled refugees

seek out information and assistance from refugees who have been resettled for long periods (Stewart et al., 2008).

### **2.5.3. Empirical Studies on Coping Strategies of Refugees**

The various coping strategies that helped refugee women cope with post-migration challenges in their host countries were documented in the literature. Some of these were:

**Engaging in income-generating activities.** Refugees engage in a variety of income-generating activities to cope with economic challenges, Street vending is one of the ways to make money. Previous studies indicated that refugees turned to street vending in their host countries as a source of income (Crabtree, 2010; Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2017; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011; Teye & Yebleh, 2015). Working as a private school teacher is another source of income for refugees. Previous studies indicated that refugees work as teachers to make money (Greaves et al., 2019; Oh & Van Der Stouwe, 2008).

To cope with their financial difficulties, some refugees engaged in wage labor. For example, a study conducted among Syrian refugees in Germany indicated that refugee households, including women, engaged in wage-earning employment to cope with economic deprivations (Crabtree, 2010). Similarly, a study conducted among refugees in Addis Ababa revealed that refugees engaged in labour work to generate income for survival (Jemal, 2020). Moreover, according to a study, internally displaced women in Darfur, Sudan, employed many means of subsistence, such as wage labor (Abdel et al., 2014).

Working as a caretaker is another form of income-earning activity, especially for refugee women. According to a study carried out on migrant women in South Africa, women were forced to work in jobs like domestic duties and caregiving to sustain their economic existence (Dodson, 2018).

**Marriage.** Some refugee women married local men to escape their financial struggles. Prior studies revealed that refugee women married local men as a means to mitigate their financial difficulties in their host countries (Chekero, 2018; Nabulsi et al., 2020). For instance, a mixed-method study with more emphasis on the qualitative design among Syrian refugees in Lebanon found that early marriage was a strategy used to help families with their financial difficulties because it lowers family expenses (Nabulsi et al., 2020).

**Spirituality, faith, and religion.** Numerous studies have revealed the importance of spirituality, faith, and religion in helping refugee women deal with the difficulties they face after leaving their home country (Chung et al., 2012; Maung et al., 2021; Olukotun et al., 2019). A qualitative study among women of refugee background in Australia found that the importance of religious practice in their daily lives was a vital means of coping during resettlement (Hawkes et al., 2021). Another study conducted in Ethiopia documented that Eritrean refugee women used reading the Bible and going to church to deal with various adaptation challenges (Kidist, 2016).

Additionally, studies conducted on both genders revealed that prayer and religion played a vital role in enhancing refugees' well-being (Eid & Diah, 2019; Hasan et al., 2018; Oviedo et al., 2022; Zbidat et al., 2020). In a similar vein, a qualitative study among Liberian refugees in Ghana found that engaging in religious activities served as a coping strategy for the challenges that they encountered adjusting to their new life (Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2017). Moreover, Tippens (2017) conducted an ethnographic participant observation among urban Congolese refugees in Kenya and found that one of the ways refugees were able to mitigate stress to promote resilience was through faith in God's plan.

**Cognitive reframing.** Prior studies indicated that refugees used cognitive reframing as a coping strategy for post-migration stressors (Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012; Walther et al.,

2021; Zbidat et al., 2020). Similarly, a qualitative study among Sudanese refugees in Australia found that refugees remained optimistic about the future and downplayed and normalized their challenges despite their present struggles (Khawaja et al., 2008). Additionally, a qualitative study among Burmese refugee women in the United States found that cognitive reappraisal was one of the coping strategies employed by refugee women to deal with adaptation stressors (Maung et al., 2021).

**Avoidance.** Studies indicated that refugees used avoidance as one of their coping strategies to cope with post-migration stressors (Walther et al., 2021; Zbidat et al., 2020). For instance, a study conducted among adult refugees in Germany indicated that refugees employed withdrawal from stressors and distance from hardships as coping strategies to overcome the adversities they face (Walther et al., 2021).

**Venting emotions.** Refugees used venting emotions to deal with various adversities in their host countries. For example, a qualitative study conducted among Syrian refugees in Germany revealed that refugees used crying as a coping strategy for post-migration stressors (Zbidat et al., 2020).

## **2.6. Literature Gaps**

My study's general objective was to examine the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa. To this end, I reviewed the empirical studies on the major adaptation challenges that necessitate social support for refugee women. In this regard, I found that several studies have been conducted on refugee women's post-migration adaptation challenges in high-income and low- and middle-income countries. Most studies conducted on refugee women's adaptation challenges in developed countries emphasized issues like social isolation, social and cultural integration challenges, and mental health problems. Contrary to this,

studies conducted on refugee women's adaptation challenges in low- and middle-income countries focused on economic problems.

Particularly, there have been some studies showing the adaptation challenges that refugees face in Ethiopia. However, refugees were homogenized in the existing studies. The gender differences among refugees have an impact on how and what adaptation challenges they encounter. Refugee women encounter a range of challenges related to conflict and displacement that tend to be distinct from those faced by refugee men (Morina & Emmelkamp, 2012).

There are, however, some studies in the gray literature that focus on the challenges that Eritrean and Somali refugee women have in integrating. Even these studies offered an incomplete understanding of the challenges that Yemeni refugee women face in Addis Ababa. Refugee women with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds from other refugee ethnic groups, such as Yemeni refugee women, may experience unique adaptation challenges. No study has been done on the adaptation challenges faced by Yemeni refugee women in particular. Hence, examining the adaptation challenges of Yemeni refugee women was worthwhile and helps the concerned body design intervention programs that facilitate the adaptation processes of refugee women.

I also reviewed empirical studies on refugee social support. Accordingly, prior studies highlighted the importance of social support to assist refugees' adjustment to a new environment and enhance their well-being. Nevertheless, these studies have three limitations. First, they have not illuminated the contextual experiences of social support among refugee women residing in Ethiopia. Most prior studies concentrated on high-income countries. Additionally, some studies were conducted in low- and middle-income countries. These studies were conducted in different socio-cultural, economic, political, and resource contexts that were markedly different from the

Ethiopian context. This indicates a need for context-sensitive social support research among refugee women in Ethiopia. There were a few studies conducted on refugee social support in Ethiopia. However, the importance of support from informal sources for refugees' smooth adaptation process was overlooked in the studies. Additionally, they did not center on social support as the primary research focus. This indicates there is a research gap in examining the social support experiences of refugee women in Ethiopia. The lack of such studies in Ethiopia highlights the need for a more nuanced and holistic understanding of social support experiences among refugee women in Addis Ababa. Given that there is limited knowledge about the social support experiences of refugee women in Addis Ababa, this study adds to the research knowledge on refugee social support.

Second, phenomenology did not appear in most of the prior studies. As a result, social support through the voices and narratives of refugee women's lived experiences was not examined. Third, prior studies fail to address how refugee women deal with adaptation challenges in the face of social support deficit.

Moreover, I reviewed existing studies on refugee coping strategies. Accordingly, many studies focus particularly on refugee women's coping strategies conducted in high-income countries. Thus, the studies were framed in the context of developed countries. However, there were some studies conducted on refugee women's coping strategies in low- and middle-income countries, specifically in African countries. Even these studies did not illuminate the context of refugee women's coping strategies while residing in Ethiopia. Refugee women may use unique coping strategies to adapt to challenges, depending on the host country's context. Coping is contextual and dependent on specific environmental demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

According to Simich et al. (2004), refugees' coping resources are contextualized by taking into account their host countries' contexts.

Adaptive functioning is more typical among refugees than pathologies (Summer, 1999). Among conflict-affected populations, coping has been designated as a priority research topic for their mental health and psychosocial support (Tol et al., 2011). Refugees' coping mechanisms, assets, and efforts to address the challenges associated with adaptation are essential components of understanding the refugee as a whole person within their social milieu (Van Breda, 2018).

However, there are some studies concentrated on refugees' coping and positive adaptation in Ethiopia. These studies have two major limitations. First, refugees are homogenized in the existing studies. Depending on an individual's gender, coping strategies for traumatic events vary (Halcón et al., 2004). Studies conducted among conflict-affected populations, including refugees, indicated that men and women cope differently (Ezard et al., 2011; Hussain & Bhushan, 2011; Renner & Salem, 2009). Second, prior studies offered a limited understanding of the coping strategies that Yemeni refugee women employ in Addis Ababa. They concentrated on refugee populations other than Yemenis, including Somalis and Eritreans.

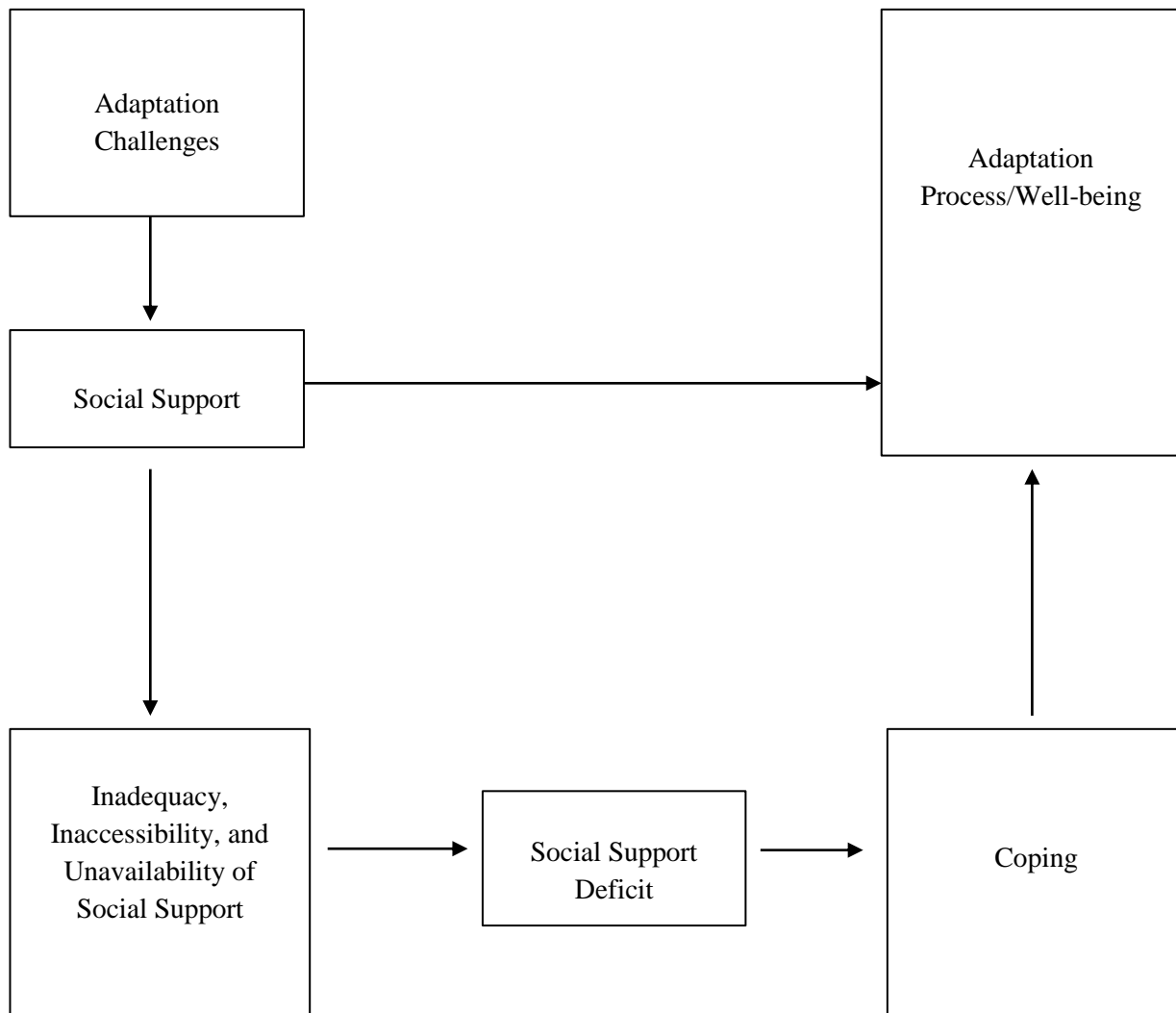
According to Shihehgar et al. (2017), research should look into "what" strategies are associated with coping as well as "how" these strategies help in the adaptation of refugee women. Thus, identifying the coping strategies used by refugee women in the face of social support deficit sheds light on the factors that contributed to successful adaptation.

## **2.7. Conceptual Framework**

Based on the study's findings, I developed a general conceptualization of refugee social support. The conceptual framework visually represents the connection between adaptation challenges, social support, coping, and well-being. Specifically, the framework highlights the

adaptation challenges requiring social support. Social support has aided in shielding refugee women during their adaptation processes. The framework also depicts that inadequate, inaccessible, and unavailable support results in a social support deficit. When refugee women face a social support deficit, they use other coping strategies. This, in turn, has an impact on the well-being or adaptation process of refugee women.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for refugee social support



## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

This chapter comprises nine sections. The first section describes the research philosophy. This section describes why I chose the constructivist research paradigm. The second section describes the study's design and states the reasons why qualitative study design, particularly descriptive phenomenology, best fits the research aim to examine the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women. The third section discusses the geographical and socio-economic characteristics of the study area and the rationale for selecting it.

The fourth section describes the study participants and sampling. Specifically, the section discusses the inclusion criteria for selecting participants and its sampling technique. The fifth section describes the data collection instrument and states the suitability of a semi-structured interview to collect the data. The sixth section describes the procedures for collecting the data including, the recruitment of interviewer, interview location and time, duration of interviews, number of interview sessions, and incentives for participants.

Section seven describes the data analysis procedures that were used to produce the findings of the study. Section eight outlines procedures for ensuring the trustworthiness of the data. This section specifically describes the strategies that were used to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The last section discusses the ethical issues considered throughout the study, which include informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity.

#### **3.1. Research Philosophy**

Implicitly or explicitly, research activities, including research questions, research methods, and design, are informed by philosophical perspectives. The choice of philosophical

perspectives is influenced by the ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations associated with the paradigm that the researcher adopts (Creswell, 2013). “A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimate or first principles” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.107). Finding the right research methodology requires researchers to articulate their views about knowledge and to be faithful to that view in the design of their research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) analyzed research paradigms in qualitative research based on ontology, epistemology, and methodology. As per Guba and Lincoln (1994), ontology has to do with the form and nature of reality, whereas epistemology studies the nature of the connection between the knower and what is knowable. On the other hand, the term methodology refers to techniques used to determine what an investigator thinks is knowable.

This study was guided by the assumptions of the constructivist paradigm. Ontologically, constructivists are relativists. “Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions that are socially and experientially based, local, and specific in nature” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Constructivism assumes that individuals construct the meaning of reality based on their experiences, which are usually negotiated socially (Patton, 2015). I acknowledge the existence of multiple realities. There is a diversity of experiences among refugee women’s associated with social support. The paradigm helped me explore participants’ diversified, local, and context-specific social support experiences.

Epistemologically, constructivists are transactional. In the constructivist paradigm, each constructs knowledge through social interaction (Galbin, 2014). I considered that the findings should be drawn from interactions between the interviewer and the participants. In other words,

the findings about social support experiences were produced only through interaction between the interviewer and refugee women.

Methodologically, constructivists use a method aimed at the construction of previously held constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Interaction between the researcher and respondents elicits constructions. Guided by this paradigm, I used a method that helps participants reveal their social support experiences.

### **3.2. Study Design**

The study employed a qualitative research design. Qualitative research helps the researcher understand the meanings or realities that participants construct in their interaction with their world (Sargeant, 2012), and this is best captured through participants' narratives of their experiences (Merriam, 2014). Scholars like Creswell (2013), Liamputtong (2013), Padgett (2017), and Patton (2015) identified many reasons why qualitative designs are the most appropriate for use in studies like this. I chose three of them.

Stating it differently, I chose a qualitative research design for three reasons. First, qualitative research enables the researchers to investigate lesser-known phenomena and help bring them to the forefront (Padgett, 2017; Patton, 2015). Little is known about the social support experience of refugee women in Ethiopia in general and in Addis Ababa in particular. Social support was not prioritized in existing refugee studies. Using a qualitative research design enabled me to bring social support to the forefront in the refugee context.

Second, qualitative research helps me understand the viewpoints of refugee women from their perspectives. Qualitative research is carried out when there is a need to give voice to those who have been silenced (Creswell, 2013). Yemeni refugee women who reside in Addis Ababa voices are rarely heard; they are refugee women whose unique set of social support experiences

was not adequately understood as they are a minority in the general population in Ethiopia. In addition, a qualitative research design is important, particularly when working with marginalized groups such as refugee women (Liamputtong, 2013).

Third, qualitative research is suited for this study because it allows for a focus on both the nature of a phenomenon and the social process surrounding that phenomenon (Padgett, 2017; Patton, 2015). Using qualitative research, I was able to examine not only refugee women's views but also contextual factors that surrounded their social support experiences.

I specifically used a phenomenological approach for this study. Phenomenology is "the study of phenomena: their nature and meanings. The focus is on the way things appear to us through experience or in our consciousness where the phenomenological researcher aims to provide a rich textured description of lived experience (Finlay, 2008, p. 1). Phenomenology is a reflective and inductive approach (Vagle, 2018). Phenomenology's fundamental objective is to understand a person's experience within a specific context (Creswell, 2013). It entails gaining an understanding of an individual's lived experiences (Vagle, 2018).

Phenomenological research involves "going back to people's specific experiences and letting the concepts come from there" (Todres & Holloway, 2010, p. 183). The lifeworld and the phenomena as they are experienced by humans constitute phenomenology's ontology (Jackson et al., 2018). The study was conducted to uncover the lived experiences of refugee women's social support, so phenomenology is the most appropriate research method.

In particular, descriptive phenomenology was chosen in the study. The descriptive phenomenological method reveals the lived context of the participant through a non-deceptive focus on the participant's perspective (Giorgi, 2009). Descriptive phenomenology aims to describe a particular phenomenon, or the appearance of it, through the lived experience of the

participants (Merriam, 2014). Descriptive phenomenological approach assumes that the phenomenon has an essence and that it can be adequately described (Vagle, 2018). Descriptive phenomenology aims to understand a phenomenon as experienced by a participant in their lifeworld (Jackson et al., 2018).

Descriptive phenomenology was employed for this study for three reasons. First, descriptive phenomenology is the most appropriate phenomenological approach when researching to find universal characteristics of a phenomenon that have not been fully understood through previous studies (Swanson-Kauffman & Schonwald, 1988). Descriptive phenomenology was the appropriate research approach for this study because the essence of social support experiences of refugee women have not been fully understood by prior studies. The study highlighted the shared social support experiences of refugee women. It also attempted to understand refugee women's experiences in their lifeworld.

Second, descriptive phenomenology provides a deeper and richer understanding of the nature of the phenomenon. Compared to other methods, the descriptive-phenomenological method allowed for a deeper and more holistic understanding of the social support experiences of refugee women. Thirdly, given how crucial bracketing is in the research process, I preferred describing the experiences of refugee women receiving social support to interpreting and explaining them. Hence, descriptive phenomenology seemed to be the best approach for achieving my goal.

### **3.3. Study Area**

The study was conducted in Addis Ababa. During the time of Emperor Menelik II in the late 1800s, Addis Ababa was established as a royal camp (Ezana, 2021). Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, is the country's geographic center, plays a crucial symbolic, political, and

economic role in Ethiopia, and is surrounded by the Oromia Regional State (Ezana, 2021). Addis Ababa is one of the largest urban centers in sub-Saharan Africa [United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 2008].

Addis Ababa is often referred to as "the political capital of Africa" for its historical, diplomatic, and political significance for the continent (Abnet et al., 2017). Addis Ababa serves as the diplomatic hub of Africa and is home to several international organizations, including the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) headquarters (Abnet et al., 2017). Addis Ababa and other major Ethiopian urban centers are connected economically and by roadways and air transport. For the movement of commodities and services to other regions of the nation, the city acts as a center (Ezana, 2021).

According to the 1995 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) constitution, Addis Ababa is one of Ethiopia's two self-governing chartered cities and has the status of a special autonomous region (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 1995). The city is divided into eleven sub-city administrations, each of which is in charge of budget planning, execution, and allocation for the provision of municipal services and socioeconomic development (Ezana, 2021).

Demographically, Addis Ababa is a multi-ethnic city (UN-Habitat, 2008). Owing to its position and standing, several individuals come to the city in search of services and work opportunities. Net migration plays a major role in the city's growth because of the declining fertility rate (UN-Habitat, 2017). It is the largest city in the country, with an estimated population of 5.4 million people (World Population Review, 2023).

Of all the Ethiopian cities, Addis Ababa has the strongest economy by a considerable amount (Abnet et al., 2017). According to UN-Habitat's (2017) report, Addis Ababa produces 20% of all urban jobs nationwide and 29% of Ethiopia's urban GDP. The report further indicated

that nearly the majority of the city's GDP is derived from the services (63%) and industrial (37%) sectors.

In Addis Ababa, the percentage of jobs in the informal sector declined sharply, from 37% in 2003 to 6.6% in 2020 (Ezana, 2021). In the city, the unemployment rate was 14.96% in 2015. Compared to men's unemployment, which was 10% in the same year, women's unemployment was found to be substantially higher (19.1%) [Institute of Development and Policy Research (IDPR), 2015]. The Central Statistical Agency (CSA) (2015) reported that 24% of Addis Ababa's population lives in poverty. Additionally, the report revealed that women were more impacted by poverty than men.

Addis Ababa purposefully selected for this study because a large number of Yemeni refugee women live there compared to other cities and towns in Ethiopia. The capital of the country, Addis Ababa, is home to 74,353 urban refugees originating from 28 different countries, and women make up about 55% of the urban refugee population (UNHCR, 2023c). Over 2,400 Yemeni refugees reside in Addis Ababa, and they are the second-largest urban refugee group following Eritreans (UNHCR, 2023c).

### **3.4. Participants and Sampling**

The inclusion criteria for the study participants were: being a Yemeni refugee, being a woman, living in Addis Ababa for at least one year, being an adult (age 18 years or older), being able to communicate in Arabic, and being able to give verbal informed consent. Specifying the minimum time since arrival helped ensure participants could share their social support experiences.

Qualitative studies tend to rely heavily on people who can provide rich descriptions of their experiences (Padgett, 2017). To find refugee women willing to share their social support

experiences, purposive sampling was used. I chose purposive sampling because it is employed to find and choose information-rich participants (Bryman & Bell, 2018; Patton, 2015). This involves finding and selecting people who have particular experience with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Among the types of purposive sampling, criterion sampling was used. The rationale behind criterion sampling is to identify each participant that satisfies a set of predefined criteria (Patton, 2015). Refugee women with experience with the phenomenon being studied were selected. I was able to provide a thorough description of the social support experiences of refugee women by using criterion sampling.

Participants were recruited through JRS. I chose JRS because it was located near my home. JRS staff members provided contact information for a few Yemeni refugee community leaders. Before the data collection, I told Yemeni refugee community leaders about the inclusion criteria to identify potential participants. Acting as gatekeepers, the Yemeni refugee community leaders assisted me in the recruitment process for the study. A total of 27 potential participants were recruited for the study. Of these, 16 participants met the study criteria. Participants were informed about the objective of the study and their voluntary participation in it. Due to their assumption that the semi-structured interview would be emotionally challenging, two participants chose not to participate. After receiving an information sheet, one other woman declined to participate without giving a specific reason. Thus, I ended up with 13 participants.

There are no hard-and-fast rules when it comes to determining sample size for different qualitative approaches (Padgett, 2017). However, Sandelowski (1995) argued that the sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too small since it is difficult to achieve data saturation nor should it be too large, as it is difficult to make a case-oriented analysis. Rather than emphasizing the number of study participants, descriptive phenomenology focuses on the

richness of descriptions of experiences. I found no depth of descriptions after interviewing 13 refugee women.

### **3.5. Instrument**

The tool used to collect data was a semi-structured interview. I chose semi-structured interviews for two reasons. First, a semi-structured interview is an effective data collection instrument to explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a particular phenomenon (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Liamputtong, 2013). The semi-structured interviews allowed refugee women to provide a deeper and richer exploration of their lived experiences. Second, a semi-structured interview is a helpful data collection instrument that encourages meaningful discussion (Smith et al., 2009). The semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer to ask more in-depth and probing questions during the discussion, which was important to have sufficient depth of description of experiences.

Giorgi (1997) indicated that in descriptive phenomenological interviewing, “questions are generally broad and open-ended so that the subject has sufficient opportunity to express his or her view extensively” (p. 245). Thus, I made an effort to design open and broad interview questions so that the participants could give a detailed narrative description.

The interview guide was categorized into four sections (see Annex VII). The first section inquired about the background information of study participants. Specifically, it addressed the socio-demographic characteristics of participants, such as age, marital status, the highest level of education attained, length of stay in Addis Ababa, and number of children, if any. It also asked about refugee women’s reasons for choosing to come to Ethiopia, registration issues, and the refugee status determination process. The second section focused on the adaptation challenges that refugee women encountered in Addis Ababa.

The third section inquired about refugee women's social support experiences, particularly the source and types of social support that refugee women received, and the meanings attached to being supported by social support sources. The fourth section focused on the coping strategies of refugee women to deal with adaptation challenges in the face of constrained social support.

The interview item wording was reviewed by two Assistant Professors of Social Psychology at Addis Ababa University who have experience in designing semi-structured interview tools and have experience researching various issues involving refugees. Based on the suggestions of the instructors, the wording of some interview questions was amended to enhance their clarity. For instance, I drafted the interview question, such as "What type of social support do you receive?" In response to experts' comments, I reworded this question to ask, "Can you describe the specific types of social support available to you?"

Pilot interviews with two refugee women who meet the inclusion criteria were conducted. This was essential to practice phenomenological interviewing and bracketing. The main study did not include the data gathered from the refugee women who took part in the pilot interviews.

### **3.6. Data Collection Procedure**

The interviews were conducted in Arabic, the mother tongue of the participants. The quality of data is enhanced when the data collector shares a similar background with participants and understands and shares participants' culturally particular ways of expressing their emotions (Creswell, 2013). Hence, I recruited an interviewer who had experience conducting semi-structured interviews and spoke Arabic fluently. Recognizing that some refugee women may find it uncomfortable to speak with a male interviewer, I chose a female interviewer. The interviewer was in her 20s, bilingual, and had a master's degree in social psychology.

The gender and language background of the interviewer played a paramount role in establishing trust and putting the participants at ease. Since the interviewer shared a similar gender and linguistic background with the study participants, refugee women found it comfortable to share their experiences with the interviewer.

Data collectors should be familiar with the study's objectives as well as the ethical issues that guide the research (Shimpuku & Norr, 2012). Hence, the interviewer received a one-day orientation addressing the objectives of the study, the content of the semi-structured interview, ethical considerations, how to approach and probe participants, phenomenological interviewing, and reflexivity. The interviewer signed a confidentiality agreement (see annex V).

There is no single, accepted phenomenological interviewing method. However, an attempt was made to align the interview processes with the descriptive phenomenological approach by reading prior studies conducted using this research approach. This enhanced the study's rigor and maintained its methodological consistency. Study participants' context was made by asking context questions about their reasons for choosing to come to Ethiopia, their experiences with registration issues, and the refugee status determination process. Contextualizing questioning elicited refugee women's life world in their natural attitude.

Study participants' experiences were explored in detail with more interview questions. Social support could be experienced in many ways by different refugee women. Hence, participants were asked many questions to explore their various social support experiences. Refugee women were also asked further to describe their particular moments. Participants in the interview process were guided but not led, allowing the phenomenon to make itself manifest. There were probing questions like, "Could you elaborate on what you meant when you said...?"

Phenomenological reduction what Husserl (1970) called “bracketing” and actively listening study participants experiences were done during the interview process. The dialogue between the interviewer and study participants defined the interview process. The interviewer acknowledged and valued the distinct perspectives and information held by the study participants.

Following the verbal consent process, the interviewer explained to the participants why and how the audio recording would be used, and the interviews were audio recorded (Willig & Rogers, 2017). The interviews lasted between one and two hours. Participants were interviewed once. In total, 13 interviews were conducted with 13 participants.

It was necessary to find a safe and comfortable place for the participants to disclose their experiences during the interview process. Hence, the interviews were carried out in well-ventilated rooms in JRS and participants’ homes based on participants’ preferences. Two participants were interviewed at JRS, and the remaining 11 were interviewed in their homes. Moreover, the interviews were conducted at the participants’ convenience time.

In appreciation for their time spent with the interviewer and as compensation for their transportation, each participant received 200 Birr (Ethiopian Birr) at the time of the interview. The data collection started in the first week of June, 2022 and end in the first week of September, 2022. Only the actual interview time with study participants was specified by the period. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer, who then translated the narrative data from Arabic into English. The translated transcripts were checked by one of my colleagues, who has adequate experience translating from Arabic to English. This was important to ensure that the meaning of the translated transcript was equivalent to the intended meaning of the original transcribed document. He gave her minor comments on sentence structure. There were

266 pages total for the transcripts, ranging from 15 to 29 pages each. The translated transcript had 164 pages altogether, with each page ranging from 10 to 22 pages. After completing her job, the interviewer gave me back the audio recording, transcription, and translation of the data and then deleted it.

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

In keeping with the tradition of descriptive phenomenological research, the data analysis placed a strong emphasis on understanding the essence of the experiences of study participants. When I decided to employ descriptive phenomenology, I reviewed the literature for data analysis methods. I found two well-known methods of data analysis in descriptive phenomenology: Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis method and Giorgi's (2012) method of data analysis. I adopted Giorgi's (2012) method of data analysis for my study. Giorgi's (2012) method of data analysis appealed to me for two reasons. First, it is close to the field of social work. Giorgi's approach has psychological roots. Since social work and psychology are closely related, most social work studies use this methodology. Secondly, Giorgi's suggested steps are the most appropriate for describing the phenomenon being studied.

Nonetheless, I took the time to understand Giorgi's (2012) method of data analysis because I thought it was different from the most commonly used qualitative methods of analysis, such as thematic analysis and content analysis. I read and re-read Giorgi's (2012) data analysis procedures. I also read several studies conducted using Giorgi's (2012) method. This provided me with a sound understanding and enabled me to appropriately employ Giorgi's data analysis method in my study.

The steps set forth by Giorgi (2012) served as a guide for the data analysis. The first step was reading all of the data to get a sense of the whole. The transcription and translation of the

interview transcript were complete. Then, I read the interview transcript several times to get a sense of the whole. I did this with a phenomenological reduction attitude (Giorgi, 2009).

I bracketed my prior theoretical and empirical knowledge of refugee social support to take a fresh look at the data. I monitored my personal thoughts and feelings to not bias the analysis so that whatever was given in the data was what was said about it. Immersion in the study was undertaken not only during the interview process but also in the data analysis. While I was reading the interview transcript, I mentally immersed myself in the data, which helped me see what the data was saying. I focused on the phenomenon investigated, which was social support experiences. I also applied phenomenological reduction throughout the subsequent steps.

The second step was establishing meaning units. I read the transcript from the beginning again to determine where there was a significant shift in meaning within it. I marked when shifts in meaning occurred in the transcript. In other words, I broke the transcript into parts (meaning units) when I experienced a shift in meaning. I used forward slashes to demarcate between two meaning units. I read the transcript from the beginning to the end with due attention to the phenomenon being studied and was able to identify the meaning units. From 13 interview transcripts, 655 meaning units were identified.

The third step was the transformation of meaning units into psychologically sensitive expressions. At first, I created meaning units identified in the prior step. Next, while staying true to the participant's meanings, I re-expressed the meaning units in the third person. By not being emotionally drawn to the participant's natural attitude, the third-person language helps the researcher stay in the phenomenological attitude without changing the meaning content (Giorgi, 2009). Then, I transformed each meaning unit in its third-person form into a statement that

highlights the psychological meanings lived by the participant. I used a table to display meaning units, third-person expressions, and transformations.

The fourth step was identifying the constituent parts and forming the structure. I used the transformed meaning unit expressions as the basis for identifying constituents and forming the structure of the experience. However, not all transformed meaning unit expressions were useful for the identification of the constituents. I removed transformed meaning unit expressions that were not relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

The identification of constituents is similar to the identification of themes in other qualitative research methods. However, constituents differ from themes as constituents are context-dependent and interdependent with each other. I was able to categorize shared or similar experiences together. Then, I gave a descriptive title to each constituent. Because each title in the constituent represents its psychological meaning, it was not simply an issue of developing themes. Accordingly, 60 constituents were generated.

Once I identified constituents, the next step was identifying the essential structure of the phenomenon. The essential structure of experience was formed from interrelated constituents. Hence, I consequently generated essential structure that is the social support experiences of refugee women.

The last step was the discussion of the data using the identified constituents. I wrote a narrative that describes every constituent and their interrelationships through the voices of the participants. In order to write in detail about each constituent, I also took direct quotes from the initial transcript. Using Giorgi's five-step process, I present the essential structure and constituents in the study's findings section.

### **3.8. Ethical Considerations**

To obtain ethical approval for my study, first I asked staff members about the existence of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the College of Social Sciences, to which my school (the School of Social Work) belongs. They informed me that the IRB for the College of Social Sciences had not started operations. I then began looking for an accredited organization outside of Addis Ababa University that gave me ethical clearance. I found the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers, and Anthropologists Institutional Review Board (ESSSWA IRB), which is closely related to my field of specialization. Hence, ethical approval was obtained for the study from the ESSSWA's IRB (protocol number 010/2022) (see annex IV).

The interviewer provided an information sheet to participants and described the study's objectives before conducting the interview (see annex II). Participation was voluntary and verbal informed consent was obtained from all the participants after the purpose of the study was fully described to them. I preferred verbal informed consent over written informed consent because some participants might not feel comfortable signing a paper form. I felt oral informed consent would enable participants to speak freely about their experiences.

According to the assumptions of the descriptive phenomenological approach, study participants were not deceived into providing data. Respondents were informed that they could stop the interview, withdraw from the study at any time, refuse to respond to any items of the interview, or withdraw any information they had already provided before November 5, 2022. Additionally, participants were assured that there was no risk or harm associated with the study. Participants were also informed about their preferred interview locations and times, the duration of interviews, incentive packages, and communications about the findings of the study.

Study participants were informed of the availability of counseling services if they requested it. In case any participant became distressed at any time during the interview, I provided information about the availability of counseling services at the Addis Ababa University Guidance and Counseling Office. Referral systems were put in place with a counselor. However, during the whole data collection period, no participant was referred to a counselor.

With the participants' permission, the semi-structured interview was recorded using an audio recorder (a Sony digital tape recorder, PX470). Participants were assured that pseudonyms would be used in place of any identifying information in the transcripts. Participants were informed that the audiotapes and the transcripts were kept in a safe place (on my personal computer with a safety code). All of the study participants' data were anonymized, and confidentiality was maintained at all times. In general, all methods related to human participants were carried out by the American Psychological Association's (APA) ethical guidelines.

### **3.9. Study Rigor**

Consensus about what constitutes a high-quality qualitative study is somewhat difficult (Padgett, 2017). However, the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is established through credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure study rigor, I used various verification strategies throughout the study.

**Credibility.** One of the strategies that I used to ensure credibility was bracketing, or epoche. Bracketing was done throughout the study, including the processes of data collection, transcription, translation, analysis, and write-up. I controlled my biases by bracketing my assumptions. I was aware of my thoughts about refugee social support and took precautions to bracket them. For example, I pushed the information I had about the insufficient support refugees received from humanitarian organizations aside.

I was cautious at the time of developing the interview guide. Instead of having interview questions reflect my preconceptions, I was able to develop the questions in a way that participants could describe their experiences in their own words. I also carefully paid attention not to insert my personal feelings and thoughts into the analysis and write-up phases of the dissertation project. The bracketing process attempted to reduce the researcher's assumptions about phenomena based on previous experiences and keep the interview as genuine as possible (Creswell, 2013).

To bracket my assumptions and personal bias, I used a journal. Using a journal helped me document personal bias and my initial thoughts following developing the interview guide, reading interview transcripts, and conducting the data analysis. The journal allowed me not to insert my previous expectations and understandings into the study and enabled me to become open to the lifeworld of refugee women.

I acknowledged that it is difficult to do complete bracketing. It was challenging for me to completely separate my feelings and knowledge of refugee women's social support experiences. However, I was conscious of my own experiences and prioritized the experiences of refugee women. Stated differently, I distinguish my experiences and those of refugee women.

Peer debriefing was also employed to ensure credibility. I sometimes took a break from the data analysis to speak with my PhD fellow for debriefing. I revealed my ideas and emotions to my colleague, who assisted me in becoming conscious of my own biases and assumptions.

**Transferability.** Finding the essence of a phenomenon is the goal of phenomenological research (Vagle, 2018). I understand that establishing transferability outside of the study's participants is not the aim of phenomenological research. Hence, thick descriptive data was collected to promote understanding of contextual factors.

**Dependability.** I fully described the procedures used in the study to ensure dependability. In addition, I employed appropriate research methods to answer the research questions. Specifically, I used data collection tool and analysis procedures that were suitable to gain valuable insights into refugee women's experiences.

**Confirmability.** Reflexivity was practiced throughout the study to ensure confirmability. I consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate myself based on how my subjectivity affected the study process. I set aside my prior assumptions and expectations about refugee social support and tried to see the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women with fresh eyes. By engaging in reflexivity, I could ensure that the findings of the study precisely reflected the viewpoints of its participants rather than my personal preferences and presumptions.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings on Adaption Challenges of Refugee Women**

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section describes the socio-demographic characteristics of participants, including marital status, length of stay in Addis Ababa, age, the highest level of education attained, and the number of children, if any. It also delineates refugee women's reasons for choosing to come to Ethiopia, registration issues, and the process for refugee status determination.

The second section describes the adaptation challenges that refugee women face in Addis Ababa. This section categorized adaptation challenges into four categories: economic challenges, identity-related challenges, linguistic and socio-cultural challenges, and gender-related challenges. Each category details adaptation challenges that refugee women face in Addis Ababa.

#### **4.1. Background of Participants**

The background of study participants, including their socio-demographic characteristics, reasons for choosing to come to Ethiopia, registration issues, and refugee status determination process, are described below.

##### **4.1.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants**

The study's participants' socio-demographic characteristics included age, marital status, the highest level of education attained, length of stay in Addis Ababa, and the number of children.

#### **Badia**

Badia is a 44 year old foster mother. She has a foster child whom she considers her own. In Yemen, Badia holds a master's degree. Three years and six months have passed since she

arrived in Addis Ababa from Yemen. Before she came to Addis Ababa, Badia worked in various organizations. At the time of the interview, she was sewing clothes at home and selling them to her Yemeni refugee community.

### **Cally**

Cally's age is 57, and she is divorced. She is a single mother. She was educated up to grade 10. It's been eight years since her family arrived in Addis Ababa. She is living with her 29 years old son in Addis Ababa. Before coming to Ethiopia, she had no job.. During the time of the interview, Cally was looking for a job.

### **Emani**

Emani, a mother of one child, is 37 years old. She is divorced. Her child is 19 years old. She and her son share a home. She completed grade 8 education. She arrived in Addis Ababa five years ago. At the time of the interview, Emani was unemployed and looking for work to support herself and her child. Before Emani arrived in Ethiopia, she had no job. She traveled by boat from Hudeda, Yemen, to Somalia. She traveled from Somalia to Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, by bus after paying smugglers. She traveled to Addis Ababa after spending three months in Dire Dawa.

### **Fatim**

Fatim is a 31 year old single woman. She holds a Bachelor of Art (BA) degree in Yemen. It's been nine years since she came to Addis Ababa. She is living with her mother and two sisters. She was working in one of non-governmental organizations (NGO) during the time of the interview.

**Halima**

Halima is a single woman who is 34 years old. She has a BA degree and moved to Addis Ababa from Yemen four years and five months ago. She was living with her grandmother at the time of the interview. Halima is not married. Before moving to Addis Ababa, Halima was a training specialist at a bank in Yemen. She also worked as a customer service officer and a supervisor at a bank. She took several short-term courses in relation to her expertise. She has a brother who lives in Norway. Halima relies on her brother's remittances because she doesn't have a job since arriving at Addis Ababa.

**Iman**

Iman is a 38 year old woman. Although she is married, her spouse is imprisoned in Yemen. So, she is a single mother. Iman has never attended school. She arrived in Addis Ababa from Yemen six years ago. Three of her children live with her. She arrived from Yemen with her sisters, who are now residing in Addis Ababa. She also has relatives in Addis Ababa. Iman had no job in Yemen before moving to Addis Ababa. At the time of the interview, she was unemployed.

**Kalah**

Kalah is a 56 year old widowed woman. She completed grade 12. She came to Addis Ababa seven years ago and has four children. Only two of them live with her. The other two got married and live their own lives. She had a job while she was in her home country. She went from Sana'a to Saudi Arabia by bus. She came from Saudi Arabia to Addis Ababa by air transport.

**Aisha**

Aisha is a 38 year old lady. She is divorced from her spouse after she came to Addis Ababa. She completed grade 12. She has been in Addis Ababa for seven years. She has three children who live with her. She has no family or relatives in Addis Ababa. Her ex-husband, though, has relatives in Addis Ababa. When she was in Yemen, she was unemployed. She was working on many petty activities during the data collection period. She took a bus from Sana'a to Hudaydah. Then she sailed into Djibouti. Aisha was brought to Ethiopia by car in a container.

### **Afina**

Afina is a 33 year old woman. She is married and lives with her spouse. She had two children who were under five years old. She holds a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree in nursing from Yemen. It's been four years since she came to Addis Ababa. She had no job at the time of data collection. She cares for her children at home. She depends on the remittances from her husband's family, who live in Saudi Arabia. She flew from Aden to Sudan using air transport. She entered Metema, Ethiopia, by car from Khartoum.

### **Leila**

Leila is a 30 year old single woman. She studied college and finished her BSc degree in Yemen. It's been 6 years since she came to Addis Ababa. She lives with her 4 sisters, 2 brothers, and a cousin in a condominium house. Her mother and father died after coming to Addis Ababa. She was unemployed at the time of data collection. She entered Djibouti by ship from Al Hudaydah. When she was in Djibouti, Djibouti officials denied her a visa to enter Ethiopia. So, she was smuggled into Ethiopia by using a broker.

### **Marya**

Marya is a 40 year old divorced woman. She has no children. She lives with her mother. Marya completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade. She arrived in Addis Ababa 6 years ago. She had no job in her

homeland. She went from Sana'a to Meha using the bus. Then, she went from Meha to Djibouti using the ship. She came by plane from Djibouti to Addis Ababa. A rich man from Djibouti paid for her flight and sent her to Addis Ababa. At the time of data collection, Marya was teaching Arabic at a private school.

### **Nahir**

Nahir is a 60 year old widowed woman. She completed grade 12. It has been 10 years since she arrived in Addis Ababa. She lives with her two children and a granddaughter. She took care of her granddaughter. She did petty jobs to support her life financially during the time of data collection. She prepared and sold small food items at the time of the interview. She came by plane from Sana'a to Addis Ababa before the airport was captured by rebels.

### **Abia**

Abia is a 51 year old married woman. However, Abia's husband is imprisoned in Yemen. Abia's education level is up to 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Eight years have passed since she arrived in Addis Ababa. She has four children who live with her. UNHCR recently interviewed her after she applied for resettlement. She was waiting for the result of UNHRCR at the time of data collection. Abia has siblings who live in the United States of America. She took a short-term training in Nursing in Yemen. She was working as a cashier in a supermarket at the time of data collection. Abia went from Sana'a to Al Hudaydah using a bus and then to Djibouti using the ship. She came from Djibouti to Addis Ababa by plane.

Overall, thirteen refugee women between the ages of 30 and 60 participated in the study. Participants in the study had lived in Addis Ababa for three and a half to ten years at the time of the interview. In terms of marital status: two were widowed, three married, four divorced, and four single. Nine participants had one child or more, while the remaining four had no child. Eight

of the refugee women with children were single mothers. Five participants had completed tertiary education; one participant was illiterate, one had completed primary school, two did not finish secondary school, and four participants had completed secondary school.

#### **4.1.2. Reasons for Choosing Ethiopia**

Participants in the study described their reasons for choosing to come to Ethiopia. Participants chose Ethiopia for different reasons. These reasons can be grouped into three categories: favorable weather conditions, increased Western migration opportunities, and family ties. For some participants, there was no single reason that made them choose Ethiopia; rather, it was a combination of two or more reasons. For others, a single factor was responsible.

##### **4.1.2.1. Favorable weather conditions**

One of the factors that influence where people settle is the weather. When the weather is unfavorable, people relocate to locations with pleasant weather. The same holds for my study's participants. Some participants in this study were forced to flee their homeland country and seek safety in others nearby countries, like Sudan and Djibouti. The temperature in these countries was high, making it impossible to dwell there. As a result, they chose to come Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which provides pleasant weather for its inhabitants.

Participants like Afina, Aisha, and Leila described that the weather conditions in the countries they resided in first after they left their homes were not conducive. For example, Afina and her family were initially sheltered in Sudan for a while. However, they found the temperature in Sudan to be very hot. Informal social networks are crucial in providing information about where participants live. In Addis Ababa, Afina has a friend. Afina informed her friend of Sudan's bad weather and expressed a desire to leave the country. Afina's friend, an

urban refugee in Addis Ababa, gave her information about the conducive weather conditions in Addis Ababa. Consequently, Afina moved to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Similarly, Aisha revealed that her children struggled to adjust to Djibouti's weather. For the sake of her children's safety, she decided not to register as a refugee in Djibouti:

I couldn't live in Djibouti with my family. The authorities in Djibouti would place my family and me in a camp if I registered there as a refugee. My children couldn't adjust to the weather in Djibouti, so we didn't want to stay in a camp. The water itself was salty. I escaped Yemen to protect my children's lives, so I wanted to leave Djibouti so that they could live in a decent place.

#### **4.1.2.2. Increased Western migration opportunities**

Given the forced nature of migration, most refugees are economically deprived. So, they dream of moving to Western countries and changing their lives. Some of the respondents came to Ethiopia expecting that their chance of moving to Western countries would increase. Aisha described, “My husband's brothers live in European countries, so we came to Ethiopia thinking that UNHCR would facilitate our chance of moving to them.”

However, refugee women found that their expectations didn't match reality. Respondents complained that, despite having applied several times, UNHCR did not accept their applications for resettlement. For example, Badia applied for resettlement at UNHCR several times. She thought that she would get the chance to settle in Western countries. But UNHCR consumed much of her time. She shared:

I applied for resettlement at UNHCR several times. It took a long time. I wasted my time because of the UNHCR. If I had not waited for UNHCR, now I would become a businesswoman. But I didn't start the business because I was waiting for UNHCR's

resettlement program. I wasted three years expecting resettlement. Now I have decided to give up UNHCR and focus on my life. I don't want to waste another moment. I ignored the resettlement issue and focused on my life. Resettlement was a dream, not a reality. This is my reality. I started to think about the real thing.

Some respondents also reported that some refugee ethnic groups were favored and got the chance for resettlement more than their ethnic group. Aisha stated, "UNHCR does not allow Yemenis to be resettled. They allow refugees from other countries like Eritrea." Similarly, Marya was disappointed in UNHCR, as she claimed the organization didn't treat her and her ethnic group refugees equally with other refugee groups. She said, "What annoyed me the most is that we Yemenis are not given the same opportunities for resettlement as other refugees in this country. They are refugees from other countries, especially Eritreans, who got resettlement in third countries."

#### **4.1.2.3. Family ties**

Refugee women chose to come to Ethiopia for family ties. A few of the study's participants were of Ethiopian descent. They had few relatives they knew in Ethiopia. They thought that living in Ethiopia would not be difficult. So, they decided to come to Ethiopia. They come to Ethiopia, putting their faith in their relatives next to Allah. Leila described:

I wanted to come to Ethiopia because my family members came there earlier. My mother and my brother were in Ethiopia before I came here. My grandmother is Ethiopian. So my mother was able to come to Ethiopia. There are relatives of my mother in this country. But they don't approach and support us.

#### **4.1.3. Registration Issues and Refugee Status Determination Process**

Refugee women arrived in Addis Ababa using different routes. When refugee women arrived in Addis Ababa, they went to the office of the Refugees and Returnees Services (RRS), previously called ARRA, to submit their application for refugee status. In Ethiopia, it is RRS that determines an asylum-seeker's refugee status. When respondents went to RRS and submitted their application for refugee status, they did not face long waiting periods to get refugee status. As soon as they were registered at RRS, they automatically got refugee status because prima facie was given to Yemeni refugees. This was the quickest process of their application, in the respondents' view.

After they finished registration at RRS, respondents were referred to UNHCR. UNHCR records and keeps a database of each refugee living in Ethiopia. Then, RRS gave refugee women an identity paper that attested to their identity. As per respondents, it took a relatively long time to receive an identity paper from RRS compared to getting refugee status.

As Yemeni refugee women's mother tongue was Arabic, both RRS and UNHCR employed volunteer refugee interpreters serving Arabic-speaking refugees coming from Yemen, Sudan, Syria, and the like during their registration. Respondents indicated that they were happy to have female interpreters at RRS and UNHCR, which facilitated their communication with employees working at RRS and UNHCR. Emani said, "ARRA assigns an interpreter for refugees who speak only Arabic and try to listen to our cases in our language. They did everything they could to calm me down. Therefore, I would like to thank them very much."

Not all refugee women went to RRS and UNHCR immediately after they arrived in Addis Ababa and got registered there. Depending on the timing of the information they got, refugee women went to RRS and UNHCR sooner or later. For instance, refugee women like

Badia and Nahir did not get the information about where they should go and be registered immediately upon their arrival in Addis Ababa. Both refugee women got information from ethnic-like friends about the registration process after staying a long time in the city, as they had limited informal social networks during the initial period.

For instance, Nahir came to Addis Ababa for a short period. She thought that she would return to her homeland after the civil war ended. She used to renew her visa to stay in Addis Ababa until the civil war ended. However, the war could not cease. She met a fellow refugee after she stayed in the city for a long time, and he told her to register as a refugee. After she got this information, Nahir went to RRS and UNHCR to request refugee status:

At that time, I was renewing my visa by going to the immigration office. I met a refugee from Yemen after I spent several months in the city. When my visa expired, a refugee I met gave me information about registration at ARRA and UNHCR. He told me to register as a refugee. Then I went to ARRA. After finishing registration at ARRA, I went to UNHCR and got registered.

Article 15(1) of the refugee proclamation states that any person who wants to remain in Ethiopia as a refugee shall apply to RRS or the nearest police station within thirty days (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019). Despite the proclamation saying this, Badia submitted her application for refugee status at RRS after a year of stay in the country. In the initial period, Badia did not have informal social networks in Addis Ababa that gave information about registration issues and refugee status determination processes at RRS and UNHCR. She submitted the reasons for RRS and UNHCR lately. Her reasons were accepted by RRS, and finally, she got refugee status. Of course, Article 15(2) states that RRS could accept an applicant's application even if it was

submitted beyond the thirty-day deadline if the applicant had a valid reason (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019) . Badia described:

Before I met the Yemeni refugees in Addis Ababa, I was at home for one year. I didn't have information about registration at ARRA or UNHCR. When I met Yemenis, they told me that I had to go to ARRA and UNHCR for registration. ARRA asked me about my reasons for the delay. Then I told them the reasons, and they gave me refugee status.

On the other hand, the rest of the respondents went to RRS and UNHCR soon after they arrived in Addis Ababa, as they got information about the registration process immediately upon their arrival. Some of the refugee women (Cally, Emani, Iman, Afina, Abia, Kalah, Marya, and Aisha) got information from ethnically similar refugee community members. Other refugee women (Fatim, Halima, and Leila) got information from family members.

For example, Marya was registered at RRS and UNHCR immediately after she arrived in the country, as she got information from some Yemeni refugees who came before her. As soon as she arrived in Addis Ababa, she called her friends to tell her about the procedures for registration. Based on her friends' information, she was able to register with RRS and UNHCR soon after she arrived in Addis Ababa. She said, "When we came to this country, we called our Yemeni friends. They told us everything, and we were registered in ARRA and UNHCR immediately." As per respondents, JRS used to give refugees 35 Birr for transportation to facilitate their registration process.

#### **4.2. Adaptation Challenges**

When refugee women leave their homeland and reach their destination country, they start a new life in a different country. While they were living in Addis Ababa, refugee women faced

numerous adaptation challenges. These adaptation challenges ranged from minor challenges in daily life to major challenges that significantly affected the well-being of refugee women.

Refugee women differed from one another in terms of the adaptation challenges they faced. In other words, not all refugee women faced each adaptation challenge. Some refugee women faced a certain type of challenge; others faced other types of challenges.

The adaptation challenges that refugee women faced were interrelated. Not a single adaptation challenge affected the well-being of refugee women, but rather the interplay of several adaptation challenges. The presence of one challenge compounded the others. Each challenge did not affect each respondent equally.

Refugee women faced a variety of adaptation challenges, such as economic challenges, identity-related challenges, linguistic and socio-cultural challenges, and gender-related challenges. The adaptation challenges encountered by refugee women were not limited to those included in this study. However, in this section, I emphasized only the major adaptation challenges as perceived by participants in the study.

#### **4.2.1. Economic Challenges**

Refugee women faced economic-related challenges in Addis Ababa, particularly limited job opportunities and low or no income, and housing problems.

##### **4.2.1.1. Limited job opportunities and low or no income**

Having job opportunities is crucial to enhancing the economic well-being of refugees. When refugees have jobs, they can fulfill what they need on their own and become less dependent on aid. All participants complained about the limited job opportunities in Addis Ababa. Of course, many young Ethiopian nationals were unemployed due to limited job opportunities in Ethiopia. Unlike those Ethiopian nationals, what was different for refugee

women was that their chance to compete and hire in the formal sector was limited because of different factors, including needing a refugee identity paper and language difficulty. This made refugee women more disadvantaged than Ethiopian nationals.

Regardless of their educational qualifications and work experience, refugee women's job opportunities were limited. Some refugee women did have the necessary educational backgrounds and work experience in their home country. Refugee women like Badia, Fatim, Afina, Leila, and Halima completed at least their undergraduate education in their homeland. But their chances of getting a job in the formal sector were limited in Addis Ababa. For instance, Halima applied for several positions when organizations posted vacancy announcements. Nevertheless, no employer called her for an interview simply because of her refugee identity card:

For the last four and a half years, I didn't get a job. I applied for vacancy announcements in different private and government banks since it is my area of specialization. However, employers did not call me for an interview or further processing. They chose Ethiopians instead of me. They didn't choose me because I'm a refugee.

Similarly, Leila graduated as an interior designer in her homeland. She submitted her resume to several governmental and non-governmental organizations in relation to her profession. But she couldn't get the chance to work:

I have applied to various governmental and non-governmental organizations and embassies. But none of them called me, saying that they would call me. When I asked them why? They told me that I was a refugee and couldn't work.

When refugee women's job opportunities became limited, a few of them (Kalah, Aisha, and Afina) tried to explore the option of opening a business. In their attempt to open a business,

refugee women faced two difficulties. The first one is start-up capital. Participants reported that they faced difficulties obtaining the initial capital to open a business.

The second one is obtaining business licenses. With the little money they brought from Yemen and by raising money from their families and friends, Kalah, Aisha, and Afina wanted to open their own businesses. However, these refugee women faced the problem of obtaining business licenses. Kalah attempted to obtain a business license and start her own business. However, she was told by the concerned body that she could not be issued a business license since she was a refugee. Hence, her attempt to do so was unsuccessful. During this time, Kalah gave up:

I can't work in any organization because I have Yemeni nationality. Then, I tried to open a snack house by myself (self-employment) by raising some money from families. When we went to the concerned department to issue a business license, they asked us for a Kebele identity card. When we told them that we were refugees and that we had a refugee identity card, the concerned body didn't give us a business license because our identity card says that we were refugees. Then, I gave up opening the business. All this happened because of being a refugee.

When they realized that they could not obtain business licenses, Aisha and Afina still took the further step of working in partnership with Ethiopians. According to respondents, some Ethiopians knew that refugee women could not receive a business license, so they informed refugee women they could work together if the refugee women gave them the majority of the share of the profit. If not, they would stop working with refugee women. Since they did not want to lose this chance, some refugee women got engaged in business with this kind of agreement

with Ethiopians by selling their jewelry and borrowing money from their significant others to start the business.

However, respondents reported that they faced deception and were taken advantage of while working with some Ethiopian business partners. For example, after working with refugee women for some time, some Ethiopian business partners fired refugee women by claiming that it was their own business and did not acknowledge the investment that refugee women had made themselves to the business. During this time, refugee women left the business partnership without having anything in their hands. Let alone that they got what they earned together, they did not get the money they had already invested in the business. Whenever refugee women brought the issue to court, their cases were not accepted. Refugee women could not substantiate their claims with the evidence that showed they were part of the business because everything was in the name of the Ethiopian business partner.

For instance, as Aisha is a refugee, she could not be issued a business license. So, Aisha established a partnership with an Ethiopian guy. She shared:

I had previously opened a khat shop with an Ethiopian guy. There was an agreement between me and an Ethiopian guy. The agreement was that the Ethiopian guy issued the business license and rented the shop in his name, whereas I raised the initial capital equally with him. Our workplace was in the Jemo neighborhood. His attitude changed after working there for roughly six months, and he told me that this is his only shop. I asked him why. He then fired me without giving me a share of the money we earned together, even the money I initially invested. I couldn't do anything because the business license and the shop we rented were in his name. So, I left it with my bare hands. He took

my customers, money, and labor that I put into the business. I believe that Allah will not let me down and will not abandon me.

As per Aisha, her effort to work together with the Ethiopian business partner cost her. She thought that all Ethiopian business partners wanted to wrap things up behind her back because they owned the business license. Consequently, she gave up working in collaboration with Ethiopians. Aisha said that, "After this incident, I will never work together with any Ethiopian business partners. I won't put my trust in them."

Contrary to Aisha, there were local community members who were issued a business license in their name and let refugee women work without causing any trouble for refugee women. For example, Afina opened an Arab restaurant with the help of an Ethiopian guy. For her, the people of Ethiopia were sincere in cooperating with her to open the business.

The limited job opportunities left Halima, Cally, Kalah, Emani, and Leila idle. Halima reported that since she did not have a job, the only thing she did was eat and then sleep. Sitting at home without a job affected refugee women's mental well-being. Being idle and worried about different issues can become a source of distress and lead to a feeling of hopelessness. Distress and a feeling of hopelessness were more prevalent, especially for some early adult refugee women and those refugee women who had a job in their homeland. For example, Halima had worked as a customer officer, supervisor, and training specialist in the bank before she came to Addis Ababa. When she came to this country, she became unemployed. Given her age and having a job in her home country, being unemployed in this country caused her distress:

I want to work. I don't want to stay at home because I'm unemployed. At this time, given my age, it is terrible to stay at home without work. Previously, I worked in different

positions in the bank in my country. I didn't come here to stay at home. It gives me depression. I want to work and support myself, my family, and other people.

Similarly, Kalah worked for a long time in her home country. However, she did not have a job at the time of the interview. Being jobless frustrated her, and she felt that she was a hopeless person. Kalah said:

Being unemployed is a very difficult thing for someone who had a job and worked for a long time. If I had a job, I would go out and work and receive my money at the end of the month. I would use the money for my programs and save the rest. I feel hopeless when I have nothing to do.

The limited job opportunity resulted in limited income. Some refugee women could not make money and help themselves and their families due to limited job opportunities. Emani described, "How can I earn money if I am not allowed to work"? Some of the refugee women were unable to fulfill their basic needs, like clothing and food due to limited income. Being unable to fulfill basic needs was refugee women's day-to-day challenge. As the cost of living was increasing day by day, the problem of meeting basic needs persisted. Life was getting harder for refugee women to meet their basic needs let alone to live a luxurious life. Respondents like Cally came to Addis Ababa with nothing because of the war. She only had two changes of clothes. In this country, she could not buy clothes and shoes as they were running out. The same is true for Kalah who shared:

When I was in Yemen, I didn't worry about running out of clothes. Because I used to buy clothes and shoes immediately. But after coming here, I was unable to buy clothes and shoes, even though my clothes are getting worn at.

Some refugee women also faced inadequate food in Addis Ababa. Fatim described that she and her family spent days in Addis Ababa, eating one day and not eating some other days. In a similar vein, Emani reported the days in which she had nothing to eat in her home and could not find a person who give her food. As she described:

I have faced many challenges in this country. I felt hungry in this country. I know there are days when I drink sugar solution only and I sleep in an empty house (she is crying). We had our own home and everything to eat in Yemen. But we came to this country because we could not live in a war. My son and I were not given any food by the landlady while she was watching us. We had nothing to lick or taste during that time.

Associated with limited income, meeting children's demands was another difficulty for some refugee women who have children. Children need different things to be fulfilled by their parents. Children, especially below 18 years may not understand that they are in exile. So, they requested their parents to meet their needs as before. Since they were financially insecure, refugee women could not afford the high cost of goods and services necessary for children. Afina stated that, "It was difficult to raise children in Addis Ababa for me because everything was expensive, including children's toys and clothes." The lack of financial assistance from spouses compounded the problem of refugee women to meet the demands of their children. Refugee women with children except Afina were single mothers who did not get financial assistance from their spouses. Even Afina who was living with her husband could not meet the demands of her children due to limited income. In this regard, Abia shared:

Life in this country is difficult for me. In the past, it was their father who used to work and feed us. But now it's just my responsibility. It is difficult for me to raise a child alone in Addis Ababa. Feeding four children is hard. Paying rent, buying clothes for them, and

purchasing oil and sugar have become a challenge for me. Besides, the cost of living is very high.

Refugee women who had children under the age of 18 were facing the challenge of meeting their children's needs and were even worse off. Children under 18 might have a lot of needs because they were young. As a result, parents struggled to fulfill their children's requirements. Aisha has three children who are under the age of 18. As young children, they needed different things to be fulfilled by their mother, which made Aisha's life tough:

My children want many things to be fulfilled. Meeting their needs, like providing them with better food and drink, teaching them at a private school, taking care of their health, and providing them with clothes whenever a holiday comes, is a huge challenge for me.

Because of their limited income, some refugee women sometimes encounter financial troubles paying for transportation to go from place to place. Sometimes they used public buses for transportation since they could not afford taxis. They paid less for public buses than for taxis. When refugee women used transport services like public buses, some of the users were surprised and commented that they should use their cars as if they had a car. Some refugee women waited in a long line to use the bus since they did not have the financial capacity to use a taxi.

As per respondents, however, some Ethiopian nationals who used public buses did not understand the financial hardship of these Yemeni refugee women and thought that these refugee women were rich. Aisha stated, "While I waited in line to board the bus, some of the passengers said that the rich one was coming. They also said, 'Why do you use a bus since you are rich?' They told me to leave it to the poor." Respondents reported that such statements did not give them comfort. Aisha stated that when people say this, she feels so bad. Aisha shared:

When I went to the bus station to use the bus, the local people said that “why did you use a bus since you are rich?” I will not stand in line with the passenger because they would say this thing. I sit far away from the passengers and enter when the bus comes. I use this strategy because I want to avoid the words “You are rich”. Sometimes I put something on the chair and I go outside. Then when the bus is about to leave, I come and sit. These words were diminished somehow because they didn't see where I was.

The lack of income affected the mental well-being of refugee women negatively. For example, Emani described that "The thoughts about my economic life itself are on the verge of killing me". Similarly, when Cally did not have money, she felt bad and ashamed, and she gave low value to herself.

The limited income also affected refugee women's social interactions. Having limited income forced refugee women not to make new friends and have get-togethers with their already established ones. Halima stated, "I don't have a social life. I stay at home. I don't want to make friends here. I don't go to restaurants or the cinema and enjoy with my friends because of my limited income." In a similar vein, Iman stated that "I don't want to meet with my friends most of the time because I don't feel good since I have nothing at my hand (she cries)." Moreover, Cally did not show interest in meeting her friends or making new relationships with others due to her limited income:

It is very difficult to meet people when I have little money in my hand. I will not have an interest in meeting with someone. I feel ashamed to meet someone without having money in my hand. I feel bad since I had money before. I see my soul so low, and I'm ashamed. It's hard to beg because I didn't do this before.

Kalah described that she had adequate income to fulfill her needs when she was at Yemen but not at Addis Ababa. When Kalah thought about the life she spent in her homeland and the financial situation she is in Addis Ababa, she felt very sad and got angry. On the other side, she also thought that something worse could have happened. She said, "There could also be death from war. In this case, I thank Allah."

On some occasions, refugee women got job opportunities in the formal sector based on their informal social networks especially with the informational support of ethnic-similar refugee friends. Some refugee women worked in hairdressing and beauty salons, supermarkets, garment factories, and private schools. However, these jobs did have their limitations. For one thing, refugee women did these types of jobs for a temporary period. It's kind of on and off. When the job came, they made little money; when it went, they became jobless. They were not jobs which were done by refugee women for long period of time (not permanent jobs).

The second thing was employers did not pay refugee women like Ethiopians for the same type of job just because of their refugee identity cards. Additionally, the type of work exposed refugee women to physical illness. Not paying refugee women like Ethiopians for the same type of job hurt refugee women's interest in working and later influenced their decision to leave the job. For instance, Cally was employed in one of the hairdressing and beauty salons in Addis Ababa. By doing this job, she used to earn money and support her family. The employer paid her less money compared to an Ethiopian national just because she had a refugee identity card. In addition to the low payment compared to Ethiopian nationals, Cally reported that this type of work exposed her to adverse health effects. She stood and worked this job for a long period without rest every day. As a result, she was vulnerable to physical illness. After working there for some time, she decided to quit the job:

When I was employed in hairdressing, I spent the whole day from morning until night. The work exposed me to knee, leg, and kidney illnesses. I can get this job. But I don't want to do it because the cons outweigh the pros. I can't get up if I'm sick; I won't do it because it hurts my health.

Cally stated that, relatively, some jobs do not expose her to physical illness. For her, tailoring is relatively better than hairdressing. However, she could not get this kind of job. During the time of data collection, Cally was unemployed.

The third thing was that refugee women earned little money. Refugee women earned little money compared to the high transportation costs they incurred and the tiring nature of the job they did. Abia said, "We leave our children at home and go to work, and we invest our effort. But we are paid very little money." In a similar vein, Afina's husband left his job due to the insufficient wage he earned. She stated, "My husband used to work but was forced to leave because the wages paid by his employers were too low."

Moreover, Leila went to the garment factory for an apprenticeship. When she finished her apprenticeship, the owner of the factory asked her to work with them as a tailor. They did not ask for her identity card. They simply accepted her. However, the distance between her workplace and her residence was far. This caused her to spend too much money on transportation. Compared to the high transportation cost that she spent, Leila's salary was so small. A lower salary coupled with high transportation costs forced her to stop working:

There is a garment factory near Ruphael neighborhood. When I was employed in a factory there, I was paid one Birr for sewing a shirt. The house I lived in was around Tafo. It was too far away from the factory. I used to go out in the morning to work and come in at night. I leave at 5:00 a.m. and come home at 10:00 p.m. There was no taxi

available. The transport was expensive and tiresome. In addition, I got paid very little money. After working for one month, I left my job.

In a similar vein, Marya was employed as a tailor in a private factory around the Ruphael neighborhood for 1,200 Birr per month. She worked for a long time without rest when she was working in the factory. After working for about 4 months, she quit her job. The work she was doing and the salary she was being paid were not proportional. As she reported, the work was very tiring. Besides the salary was low, so she decided to stop working in the factory. At the time of the interview, Marya was teaching Arabic at a private school.

#### **4.2.1.2. Housing problem**

People from all corners of the country move into Addis Ababa in large numbers. As a result, there is high demand for housing. House rent costs rise because of the increased demand. All respondents reported that the housing problem was one of the most severe challenges that they faced in Addis Ababa. The cost of house rent was extremely difficult for refugee women to afford. The lack of affordable housing increased refugee women's vulnerability to financial hardship. Rising house rent may be a problem for most city residents. However, for refugee women, the situation is worse. Refugee women faced intersections between limited job opportunities, income, and skin color, which exacerbated refugee women's housing problems.

Based on the types of houses in which they resided, I categorized refugee women into two groups: condominium houses and compound houses. The first group included refugee women who rented condominium houses on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Except for Aisha, who lived in a condominium house downtown, respondents like Cally, Fatim, Kalah, Leila, and Nahir were included in this category. Living in condominium houses was expensive for refugee

women. Even though it was expensive, these refugee women preferred to rent condominium houses over compound houses for four reasons.

The first reason was that, unlike in compound houses, each renter in a condominium pays electricity and water bills depending on consumption. In condominium houses, landlords and ladies had no control over how much water and electricity each tenant used and did not bother them when the utility bill increased. The second reason was a chance to host relatives and close friends in their houses without fear. On the contrary, most landlords and ladies were not interested in compound houses when tenants' friends or relatives visited their residences since they thought that these guests would overuse the restrooms and use excessive amounts of water and electricity.

The third reason is that crowding among refugee women was made possible by condominium housing. Since landlords and ladies did not reside in the same building as refugee women, they were unaware of how many refugee women were residing in condominiums. Most refugee women preferred condominium houses to live together in a crowded manner to ease their financial difficulties. Refugee women faced rejection by landlords or ladies to rent their houses to big families in compound houses. Most landlords and ladies were not interested in renting their houses to large families. Owing to fear of congested or in appropriate use of restrooms and the consumption of electricity and water, most landlords and ladies did not rent their houses to large families of refugee women. This forced refugee women like Leila to rent condominium houses even though it was expensive. Leila stated, "My family's size is seven. We can't rent a house in a compound because landlords don't want to rent to large families like us." The fourth reason was that there was no long queue to use the restroom in condominium houses, unlike in compound houses.

Although it had its advantages, some refugee women faced challenges when renting condominium houses. The first challenge was that the house lords and ladies did not keep the contract and increased the house rent unreasonably. For condominium houses, there is a contractual agreement that has to be made between the house lord or lady and the tenant. The landlord or lady and the tenant sign for a certain time, usually 6 months or a year. When the tenant wants to continue, he or she is expected to renew the contract every specified period. The Addis Ababa city administration passed a regulation that banned an increase in residential home rent for six months at the time of data collection. However, as per respondents, some landlords and ladies were not abiding by the contract and the city administration's regulations and increased the rent.

Refugee women were told by the landowners or ladies that they could leave their homes if they did not pay the requested rent. Since refugee women could not afford the required money, they were forced to change the houses they resided in and were looking for another house. Their tenure in a single house became very short. This created a huge problem for refugee women. As Nahir shared:

The most severe challenge is house rent. Before I finished the contract, the house renter told me I had to increase the price. I said I didn't finish the contract, and the house renter said no. Due to this reason, I changed the house four times. In our country, with or without a contract, some people can rent houses. When the situation becomes difficult, the government announces that no one can increase the rent. In this country, despite the government's passing of a regulation that bans an increment in house rent price, landlords and ladies did not abide by this regulation.

As per respondents, house lords/ladies increased the price of house rent not only for the already existing tenants but also for potential refugee women who would like to rent houses. House lords/ladies looked at refugee women's skin color, and when they understood that they were not Ethiopians, they told them an inflated price. According to respondents, some house lords/ladies considered them foreigners who could pay the required money. This is associated with the thought that Yemeni refugees were rich. As a result, house lords/ladies increased house rent unreasonably every time. Aisha wanted to change her previous house and asked the landlord to rent it. The landlord asked her to pay twice the previously rented money:

As a refugee, when I tried to rent a house, house renters increased the price. What happened to me recently was that the house I wanted to rent was being rented for 5,000 Birr. However, the landlord informed me that the rent for this house is 10,000 Birr because I am an Arab. I asked him to rent me 6,000 Birr. But he refused. I gave up renting this house for this amount of money and turned my face to renting another house.

The second challenge was the advance payment. When refugee women were forced to leave the houses in which they resided due to an unreasonable increase in price, they looked for another house to rent. In their attempt to rent a house, they faced another challenge: the advance payment. For instance, the landlord increased the price of the house on Cally. As a result, she was forced to change houses. When she wanted to rent another house, she was asked to pay a three-month advance payment by the landlord. It was difficult for her to pay the three-month advance payment:

As a refugee, being homeless is very difficult. I went to the Bole Arabsa neighborhood and wanted to rent a condominium house. The house lord asked me to pay him three months in advance. I don't have a job. Where can I get this money from? On top of that,

I'm expected to pay money to the broker. Where can all this money come from? It's difficult.

The role of informal social support, especially family, plays a crucial role in covering the advance payment for the house rent for a refugee like Kalah. Previously, Kalah resided on the fourth floor. She was, however, unable to climb stairs because of an injury from a car accident. She wanted to move to the first floor. Changing onto the ground floor was not an easy task for Kalah because of the advance payment she was requested to make by the landowner. As she could not afford to cover the advance payment, her daughter borrowed the funds and covered it:

The house where I used to live was on the fourth floor. However, due to a car accident, I was forced to live on the ground floor because I am unable to climb stairs. To rent the house, which was found on the ground, the landlord asked me to pay three months in advance. At that time, where should I get it and pay the money? "Where shall I bring the three months advance payment? The landowner told me that if I didn't pay this money, I wouldn't be able to come in. When I was in a lot of trouble, my daughter borrowed money from someone and was able to pay the required amount.

The third challenge was the prejudice that condominium residents had toward refugee women. As per respondents, neighbors, particularly Ethiopian citizens who lived in the same building with refugee women, claimed that the price of condominiums increased as a result of the arrival of refugee women. The Ethiopian nationals living in the condominium houses accused refugee women of paying inflated money that landlords or ladies requested them. Concerning this, Nahir stated:

When the local people looked at us, they said that the cost of housing increased because of us. They said that the condominium was very cheap before we came here. They told us that the cost of a condominium house increased because we were paying the money that we were told to pay.

The second group included refugee women who lived in compound houses in the outskirts of the city. Except for participants who lived in condominium houses, the rest of the respondents resided in compound houses. Refugee women who could not afford to rent condominium houses live in compound houses. Just because of the high cost of house rent, some refugee women were forced to reside in poor housing conditions, like living in small, crowded, and poor facilities.

It is challenging, especially for refugee women with children, to live in a small room. Refugee women's housing conditions in Addis Ababa were very low compared to the houses they used to live in while they were in their homeland country. It was hard to accept this reality for some refugee women. Abia described that "We cook, eat, and sleep in a small room. Three teenage boys, a little girl, and me living in a small room is very hard." In a similar vein, Iman was persuaded to live not only in a small house but also in poor housing conditions with dirty carpets, pest infestations, and a very cold temperature:

If you look at my house, it looks like a cowshed; the floor is wet, and the roof is full of dirt. A house like this is never a house where people spend a single night. The toilet is next to me; it's very cold. I'm cleaning the floor at night to get rid of worms. Apart from that, we live in a small room with my children, which is very difficult.

In a compound house, the landlord/lady may have several rental homes. Tenants were permitted by landlords/ladies to rent houses. Refugee women make up one of the tenants. Within

a compound, many neighbors, including refugee women, are living together. While they were living in a compound house, respondents faced the uncleanness and long queues in the restrooms. Refugee women were sharing the same restroom with other neighbors. Given that they used to use personal restrooms in their country, sharing restrooms with other people became difficult for them. Usually shared restrooms were not clean, and all renters were not responsible for cleaning the restroom. Besides this, respondents complained that there was a long queue to use the restroom, especially in the morning. Associated with this, Abia indicated that "There may be seven or eight tenants in one compound. The toilet line in the morning bothers us. We had two toilets in Yemen. But in this country, there is only one toilet. Even this toilet is always busy". Similarly, Iman stated the following:

We share the restroom, and it makes you talk a lot. If I am alone, I clean it alone, but a shared toilet is very difficult. If it were mine, I would clean it alone. The toilet is used by many people, so it is not clean. I always clean up the toilet for the sake of my children. I'm supposed to clean the toilet, even if other people are living there.

For a refugee woman like Abia, living in a compound house with her children also created another challenge. Since her children were young, they wanted to play in the compound. When they were playing, children may have been told to stop by tenants and landlords. But they did not stop because they could not understand the culture. Abia described:

I can't afford to rent out a condominium. So, I live in a rented room in the compound. Living in a compound house with children is very difficult. When I lived in a compound house, my neighbors and landlord always accused my children. Most of the problems arose in relation to my children. In the house I lived in before, my children destroyed

something in the compound while they were playing. Then the landlord told me to leave the house.

Respondents acknowledged that some good landlords or ladies were understanding and patient regarding rent payments. These landlords or ladies did not hurry refugee women, despite being late in rent payments. In addition, they did not nag refugee women when the electricity and water bills increased. For example, Iman said:

The landlady was a very nice person to us. May Allah give her a long life and good health. She did not say bad words when we consumed a lot of electricity and water. She was a good person, even though we were paying money for rent.

However, according to respondents, there were also landlords and ladies who were not good people. Refugee women labeled landlords and ladies as not good people because these people were less tolerant when refugee women were late paying rent. Landlords or ladies may evict refugee women from their houses if they do not pay the rent on time. As Cally described:

At this time, how much is a one-room house for rent in Addis Ababa? It's very difficult. I can eat corn and bread with water and sleep, but I can't reside in someone's house without paying monthly rent. If we failed to pay a month's rent on time, the landlord will evict me and throw away my properties.

#### **4.2.2. Identity-related Challenges**

Refugee women faced at least two identity-related challenges described below.

##### **4.2.2.1. Unrecognized identity paper and associated challenges**

In Ethiopia, the RRS gives identity papers to recognized refugees. The refugee identity card is supposed to serve several purposes for the cardholder. However, in reality, some respondents stated that the identity papers they held did not serve their intended purposes. To get

some services, refugee women were asked by some organizations to show their identity papers. However, when refugees showed their identity papers, their papers were not recognized by some organizations and individuals. Consequently, respondents could not access the services they required.

The new refugee proclamation entitled refugees to access telecommunication services under article 34 (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019). Despite the law providing them the right to have telecommunication services using their refugee identity papers, some refugee women still could not access these services.

Emani, Halima, and Aisha reported that they faced difficulties while using telecommunication services like issuing a SIM card because of their refugee status. Among these respondents, only Aisha was issued a SIM card recently. Aisha stated, "It is only recently that I have been able to go to Tele that issued a SIM card in my name". In contrast, Nahir and Cally stated that they did not encounter problems in relation to their identity cards to use telecommunication services. They added that employees working in this organization accept their identity cards and give them the services they require just like Ethiopian nationals.

The lack of recognition of refugee identity papers limited refugee women's opportunities for personal development. For instance, the new refugee proclamation article 31(3) provided a refugee the right to apply to acquire an Ethiopian driver's qualification license using one's refugee identification document (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019). Despite the refugee law providing refugee women the right to acquire an Ethiopian driver's license using their refugee identity card, refugee women reported that they were not issued driving licenses using the refugee identity paper.

Halima wanted to acquire a driver's qualification license. When she went to one of the driving license schools in Addis Ababa for registration, they told her that she could not register because of her identity card. They also informed her that to register at their school, she had to bring someone who had an identity card from Addis Ababa City. Due to this barrier, she gave up trying to get a driver's license. Similarly, at the time of the COVID-19 global pandemic, colleges and schools were closed by the government to halt the spread of the virus. However, some driving license schools were opened and gave service to the customers at the time of COVID-19. So, Abia sent her son to driving license school. Unfortunately, the school was reluctant to admit Abia's son because of his identity card:

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, I wanted my son to get his driver's license. Then he went to schools that teach driver's licenses. When he asked them, they said that they could not issue a driver's license with his identity card. They also said that they couldn't educate a foreigner. Driving license schools are not cooperative.

The lack of recognition of refugee women's identity card also excluded them from government-subsidized goods and services. The refugee proclamation, Article 35, states that "The general distribution of products in short supply, recognized refugees, and asylum-seekers shall be accorded the same treatment as nationals" (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019 p. 11095). However, respondents like Nahir, Kalah, Abia, and Aisha described those employees working in woreda (the lowest administrative level in Addis Ababa city) did not accept their identity cards when they tried to issue ration coupons. Woreda gives its residents a ration coupon (a voucher entitling the holder to access a discount on basic commodities from association shops). To get this coupon from the woreda, one has to hold an Addis Ababa city identity card.

A woreda works with association shops to give residents basic subsidized goods like sugar, oil, and flour at a reasonable price. When refugee women went to the woreda and requested them to issue ration coupons, employees working in the woreda denied them. Since refugee women could not access basic goods from association shops at fair prices, they were forced to buy these basic goods with more money from the shops. Given the limited financial capacity of refugee women, purchasing basic goods at an expensive price created another financial burden for them.

For instance, Nahir said that she always paid a lot of money to buy sugar from shops. She went to the woreda to ask for a coupon to avoid spending a lot of money. Nevertheless, she was not given a coupon by woreda employees due to her refugee identification card:

Because I always pay a lot of money to buy sugar in a shop, I wondered one day why I hadn't just gone to woreda and asked for a coupon. I then went to the woreda and asked for a coupon. They informed me that I was unable to obtain a coupon with my refugee identification card. I made an effort to persuade them. They couldn't understand me, though.

Abia went to the woreda and requested a coupon from them. They refused to offer her the coupon. She then headed straight to the association shops. She requested them to provide her with basic goods. She took basic goods from association shops, as employees working in the association shop allowed her to take them. Abia's taking basic goods from association shops depends largely on the will of the employees working in the association shops:

Refugee women from Arab countries consumed a lot of sugar. We like to drink juice or tea at least two or three times a day. We also like to make biscuits and cookies. It requires sugar to make all these things. Especially during Ramadan, we used a lot of sugar. Most

of the time, I buy sugar from the shop, which is expensive. I went to the woreda to issue me a coupon, and they told me that I cannot get a coupon because I'm a refugee. But some sincere people who work in the association shop gave me sugar sometimes. It is given with their goodwill.

On the other hand, Leila was unable to purchase sugar and flour from association shops for many years due to her refugee status. However, the woreda issued her a coupon recently. As a result, she began purchasing flour, sugar, and oil from association shops monthly, exactly like Ethiopian citizens. This in turn kept her from making expensive purchases of basic goods.

The identity card also restricted refugee women's mobility. Respondents mentioned that they were not allowed to go outside of their residence (Addis Ababa) unless they got a permission letter from the office of RRS. As per respondents, RRS gave them an identity card based on their choice of city residence. The police will arrest them if they move outside Addis Ababa and nearby towns without permission. According to respondents, their freedom of movement was restricted. In this regard, refugee women were dissatisfied. For example, Abia stated:

We cannot go to another city whenever we want. We have to bring a permission (pass) letter from ARRA. If something goes wrong and my friends call me, I can't go to them unless I get a moving permit from ARRA. This means that I am not available for my friends when they need me.

Not only organizations but also some of the local community members did not honor the identity cards of refugee women. As a result, Badia, Emani, and Iman faced difficulty when they tried to rent houses because of their identity cards. Some landlords and ladies do not recognize their identity cards. Badia described that "I could not rent a house using my identity card. House

renters asked for my identity card. When I showed them my identity card, they said No, we didn't accept this; instead, they requested that I give a copy of my passport.” In contrast to Badia, Emani, and Iman, respondents like Aisha and Kalah, who rent condominium houses from landlords, were not asked to show their identity cards. Instead, they rented houses through committees (members of the condominium community chosen by its residents). Regarding this, Aisha stated:

We would have been homeless if a house rent had been made through the government office. But when we rent a house, we contacted committees who live in the condominium. We rent houses through them. The committee accepts our identity card without hesitation.

The lack of recognition of refugee women's identity papers increased their vulnerability to social exclusion. Because of the unacceptability of their identity card by some organizations and the local community, Badia and Leila did not feel a sense of belonging. Rather, they felt that they were alienated from the local community. However, all respondents thanked people working in health centers/hospitals, whether private or governmental. The people who were working in health centers/hospitals did not ask refugee women to show their identity cards. As long as they did have money, they could get medical treatment from both government and private health centers. Refugee women used health services just as Ethiopian citizens. Marya described:

When we go to government or private health centers or hospitals, they don't ask us for our identity card. They don't ask us for identity paper, rather name, age and the like. This is a good thing. It has reduced the challenges we may face due to our identity card. We are treated like any other citizen.

Respondents described the reasons why their identity papers were not accepted by some government and private organizations and the local community members. As per Badia, Halima, and Aisha, it was because of the unawareness of the refugee proclamation and refugee's rights and entitlements. They indicated that some employees who were working in government and private organizations and local community members did not know what the refugee proclamation says about refugees and what rights they are entitled to. Halima stated:

People don't understand refugees. Everywhere I go and show my ID, they say, what is this? They didn't accept my ID because they didn't know. The government works alone, and the people work alone. The people didn't know what the government was saying about refugees. Despite the government's ratification of a new refugee proclamation, the people and governmental or non-governmental organizations still don't know about the new law. Still, they have previous mentality and understanding. They assumed that we couldn't have the right to access some services with our refugee identity documents.

Participants also shared their thoughts about the new refugee proclamation. Aisha reported that the refugee proclamation was only on paper. It is not effective on the ground. She stated, "I have the new refugee law in my hand. Wherever I went, I showed them this proclamation. Unfortunately, they refused to accept it." Badia also reported that "some government employees, let alone respect refugee women's rights, they did know the presence of refugees in Addis Ababa city." For respondents like Badia and Aisha, the problem is attributed to the government. They assumed that the government did not do awareness-creation work about the presence of refugees in the city and their rights for officials and employees at all levels as well as for society. It was the government's responsibility to raise awareness.

#### **4.2.2.2. Increase in prices in relation to identity**

The increment in prices of goods and services associated with inflation affected not only refugee women but also the local community. However, when this increment targeted only Yemeni refugee women, it became more problematic for them. I found that sellers and profit-making service-provider organizations increased the price of goods and services for Yemeni refugee women which increased the difficulty in accessing essential goods and services. Participants repeatedly indicated the areas where they faced an increase in prices. These include shopping, restaurants, and transportation.

Respondents stated that whenever they and one of the local community members entered a shop, sellers did not tell both of them the same price. Sellers increased the prices, particularly for refugee women. About restaurants, participants reported that when they went to a restaurant, employees working in the restaurant changed the price of the menu for them.

Concerning transportation, refugee women repeatedly faced an increment in tariffs on transport services that targeted them. Especially if refugee women entered a taxi carrying some items, they were asked to pay a lot of money. Driver assistants requested them to pay an extra amount of money on several occasions. Refugee women were forced to pay what was requested since they did not know the tariff in the initial periods of settlement. Halima faced a tariff increment while she was using transport services. She said, "When I went home, people said, why you paid this amount of money for that transport service? After that, I realized that I had been cheated. So, I experienced tariff increment multiple times in transport service." In a similar vein, Nahir repeatedly faced an increment in transport tariffs while she went from place to place using a taxi. She raised one incident and described it in the following manner:

When I was going from the Megenagna neighborhood to the Bole Arabsa neighborhood, the driver assistant charged other passengers 17 Birr, but he charged me 20 Birr. When I asked him why? he told me that he should have charged me in dollars, not in Birr.

According to respondents, some good passengers helped them by letting driver assistants return money to them when they witnessed the driver assistant charging them a different amount of money. For example, the driver's assistant demanded double payment from Leila when she moved from one neighborhood to another. She avoided extra payment on transportation because of the individual who sat next to her:

When I was going to Mexico (the name of the neighborhood) from Megenagna neighborhood, the assistant asked me to pay double, and the person seated next to me clashed with the driver assistant and helped me not to pay additional money. There are some good passengers.

But, as refugee women stayed longer in Addis Ababa, they became familiar with the tariff for each fermata. After knowing the tariff for each fermata, the incidence of being cheated by driver assistants decreased. Regarding this, Afina stated that "At first, driver assistants used to charge us twenty Birr for the ten Birr transportation. But later, when we found out the exact cost of transportation, we started asking them. Then, driver assistants stopped charging us extra money." Refugee women like Leila pay only after everyone else has paid to prevent price increments in transportation. She said, "When I get into a taxi, I pay after seeing the amount of money other passengers have paid."

As per respondents, the reason sellers increased prices on goods and services for Yemeni refugees was that there was a common misunderstanding among sellers and service providing organizations that Arabs were rich and had money. Respondents claimed that people in this city

thought that Arabs were coming to Addis Ababa carrying money with bag. When the people saw them, they considered them tourists, not refugees. Halima described that "Sellers thought that we Arabs had money. So, they requested us to pay so much money while we purchase things like macaroni, rice, clothes, and shoes." In a similar vein, Badia reported:

When we go to any place to shop to buy anything, they added the cost. The Ethiopian community considered us rich. For those who have not seen Arab countries, Arab countries are like paradise. Due to this reason, they increase the price of goods and services for us.

Misunderstanding among sellers and service-provider organizations about Yemeni refugees was the major reason for increases in price for refugee women. However, there were specific factors that made refugee women vulnerable to the increase in price of goods and services. The first factor that exposed refugee women to the increase in goods and services was their skin color. Since most Yemeni refugee women's skin color is light, sellers could easily identify that they were not Ethiopians. Consequently, some sellers increased the price of goods and services. Aisha described, "Our appearance or skin color exposes us to being known by people. They see our skin color and say that these are Arabs or Diaspora people who have money." On the other hand, refugee woman like Cally reported that she was protected from price increases in relation to her identity as she could communicate with sellers using the local language despite her light skin color.

There were refugee women whose skin color looked like Ethiopians such as Halima, Marya, Kalah, Aisha, and Iman. These refugee women had Ethiopian decedents in their mothers. Halima struggled to speak Amharic, while others could speak Amharic at the time of the interview (Marya, Kalah, Aisha, and Iman). Those refugee women whose skin color was like

Ethiopian and who could speak Amharic were less vulnerable to price increases than those who struggled to speak Amharic. For instance, Halima's skin color resembles most Ethiopians' skin colors. However, she was unable to communicate with sellers properly using Amharic.

Understanding this, sellers increased the price of goods and services for her many times:

When I went to shops, the sellers thought that I was Ethiopian. I seem just like an Ethiopian in terms of skin color. When I struggled to speak Amharic words, they realized that I'm not Ethiopian. They started to cheat me. If the price of something is 100 Birr, they ask me to pay 1000 Birr.

Dressing style was a second factor that made refugee women vulnerable to an increment in price. Sometimes, when refugee women go to a shop or other marketplace wearing an Abaya (a full-length dress worn by Muslim women), sellers increase the price of goods and services. For example, Nahir stated that she was a victim of increases in price when she went shopping dressing Abaya. As per participants, sellers identified refugee women wearing Abaya that came from Arab countries. Those Yemenis who dressed in Abaya but were able to speak the local language were fortunate and less vulnerable to increase in price (e.g., Fatim and Marya). They communicated with sellers in Amharic and purchased items at the correct price.

#### **4.2.3. Linguistic and Socio-cultural Challenges**

In Addis Ababa, refugee women faced linguistic and socio-cultural challenges including language barriers, cultural differences, social isolation, obstacles to education, and uncooperative police.

##### **4.2.3.1. Language barriers**

When refugee women come to a new place, knowing the language of the local community is an instrument for their social and economic integration and to expand their job

opportunities and income. Life was not easy for refugee women to handle, especially during the initial periods associated with not knowing Amharic, which is the official language of the country. Some refugee women faced a lot of troubles in several areas like shopping, transportation, health centers, educational settings, and navigating the city.

For instance, Fatim did not know the Amharic language during the initial period. As a result, she was unable to communicate while she was using transport services and shopping. She stated, “Since I couldn’t speak Amharic, it was difficult for me to buy something in shops. I also faced difficulty using transport services.” Fatim described that language difficulty was one of the severe challenges for her because she did not know the culture and the rules of the country due to difficulty in knowing the language of the local community.

Participants also faced language difficulties when they went to health centers to seek health services. For example, Aisha went to one of the government health care centers in Addis Ababa when she got sick. As she could not speak the local language, Aisha was unable to describe her illness to the doctor properly:

Once upon a time, I got sick and went to the government health center. Then the doctor asked me to tell him what made me sick, how could I tell him that I was feeling nausea? It was very difficult for me to describe this word. I didn’t know how to describe it. Then I showed him through body language. Then the doctor understood me.

Most of the refugee women stayed in the city for a few more years and learned some Amharic words, which made it easier for them to communicate with the locals and helped them overcome some challenges brought on by linguistic barriers. For instance, Aisha has overcome some of the difficulties she faced during the initial period after she learned the local language. Conversely, participants including Badia, Halima, Afina, and Leila still struggle to interact with

the locals using Amharic. These participants' daily lives were profoundly impacted by the ongoing language difficulty. For example, because of language difficulty, refugee women's social interactions with the local community were still limited. Halima could not communicate with the local community using the Amharic language, which inhibited her social interaction. She described, "Because of the language barrier, I couldn't interact with the local people and speak their language."

The language difficulty created further challenges for refugee women's job opportunities and income. This means language difficulty exacerbates the limited job opportunities and income. For instance, Leila's inability to speak Amharic limited her job opportunities. She reported, "Some hiring organizations did not want to hire me because I do not know Amharic. These organizations said that you couldn't read and write Amharic." Similarly, the jobs Halima had gotten required her to be fluent in Amharic.

Some refugee women looked Ethiopian in their skin color but could not speak Amharic fluently. According to respondents, some of the local community members did not understand them when they said Amharic was their second language. Aisha described:

Some Ethiopian nationals who hear our accent say, "Do you lose your language after staying in an Arab country for two years? Why are you acting this way? You should speak Amharic correctly. It's preferable if you speak Amharic correctly; don't ruin it."

To learn Amharic, study participants tried their best. Nevertheless, respondents encountered the lack of a center that gave Amharic language training. Respondents described that they could not get to the center that teaches Amharic. For instance, Halima wanted to learn the Amharic language. However, she could not find the center that teaches Amharic. She stated,

"I couldn't get the center that teaches Amharic. There is no center that helps refugees learn Amharic in this city."

#### **4.2.3.2. Cultural differences**

Some of the refugee women reported that they faced cultural differences in Addis Ababa. What is legally and culturally appropriate in their homeland may be inappropriate in Addis Ababa. For example, rooted in her culture, Badia smoked Shisha in her rented home alongside her friend. She was not allowed to do so by the landlord because it is legally inappropriate in Ethiopia. For Badia, prohibiting her from practicing activities against the host country's culture or law was taken as not accepting her culture:

In my country, it's easy to smoke Shisha. But here, this is not allowed. One time, my friend visited me. We were chewing Khat together and smoked Shisha. The landlord opened my window and looked at us. He said, "why do you smoke shisha?" I said to him, Did the law say no? It's okay in my country. But he prohibited me and my friend from smoking shisha. Because of this, my friend stopped coming to my house. There is a problem in that the local community doesn't accept other cultures. They want others to like them.

In Addis Ababa, refugee women also witnessed individualistic ways of life that were different from their collectivistic culture. Refugee women used to live a communal way of life in their homeland. Emani echoed this and described, "The culture of the country was new. In Yemen, we used to live with anyone. We could eat what rich people eat, but not like that in this country; people are living their own lives. Everything is different." In a similar vein, Afina stated, "People live alone in this country. They live by closing their doors. But in our country, we live together and take things like sugar, flour, and the like from our neighbors." Moreover,

Halima stated that she used to live with her neighbors, sharing different items. But, in this city, she found that let alone sharing items, neighbors did not speak with her:

I don't communicate with my neighbors here. The neighbors close their doors. They don't want to come to you, and I don't go to them. People don't speak to each other here. Whether you are a refugee or not in Yemen, neighbors try to help you. They invite you into their home. They try to learn the language that you are speaking. But when we come here, it's not. So there is a cultural difference.

Refugee women also faced cultural variations while using public transportation like buses and taxis. In Addis Ababa, due to a lack of access to transportation, public buses and taxis transport many passengers from place to place. Since there is not enough space, passengers sit or stand closely together, regardless of gender, on public transportation especially on public buses. This is the usual trend in Addis Ababa. But for refugee women like Aisha, Afina, Leila, and Marya, it was weird. In their country, culturally and religiously, it was not appropriate to have women and men sit closely together in a taxi. Afina stated, "Men and women don't go together sharing the same seat in transport in our country. They sit separately. Our culture does not allow this." Furthermore, Aisha encountered culturally strange things while she was using a taxi. She never faced confrontation or overcrowding when she used a taxi in her homeland:

In our country, if a girl gets into a taxi, if there is a boy, he changes the seat. A boy does not sit closely with a girl because it's a shame. In Yemen, people respect girls. We usually don't leave the house. Usually, we spend our time at home. If we go out of our homes, we use a taxi with dignity. But in this country, the culture is different. In this country, while we are using taxis, there is confrontation and congestion.

In the beginning, refugee women used to think that men sat closely together with them just to do immoral things like sexual harassment. After a while, refugee women understand that when men sit together with them, it is only because of insufficient seating space. Through time, refugee women adopt this way of life.

Participants in the study also reported that they found the Ethiopian cultural food (Injera) strange. For instance, Fatim reported that she could not adapt to Injera easily because she grew up eating rice in her country. In Ethiopia, there is music, bars, and girls work as waitresses in hotels and cafes. All these things were haram (sins) for Afina and Leila. But this did not mean that the Ethiopian and Yemeni cultures were completely different. As per respondents, Ethiopia and Yemen shared some common cultural elements, like coffee ceremonies and khat chewing.

#### **4.2.3.3. Social Isolation**

When refugee women exile from their country of origin, their existing social ties are disrupted. They start life in a new social environment. They are surrounded by people they do not know. It is difficult to leave their existing social ties and live in a new social milieu, especially for refugee women who may not have people they know in their host country. The study participants who came from a more collectivist culture found it difficult to live in exile, separated from their family, relatives, and friends. Refugee women reported that they faced social isolation due to the change in culture and language. They felt that they were isolated from their existing social ties. For instance, Halima missed not only her family but also her neighbors and friends. At times, she felt sad and alone.

According to respondents, the holidays made them feel even more loneliness. For the respondents, celebrating a holiday while apart from one's family, friends, and relatives was not a holiday. The holiday was something they used to share with their friends, family, and neighbors.

However, there was nothing like that for them in this country. They consequently felt awful. Leila stated, "When a holiday comes, I spend it feeling broken inside." Similarly, Aisha used to celebrate Ramadan together with her family, relatives, and friends in her homeland. When she came to Addis Ababa, she missed all these things. In this country, she did not cheerfully celebrate the holiday:

I feel bad when Ramadan comes. It is not pleasant to celebrate a holiday outside your homeland. Sometimes I say that it is good if a holiday doesn't come because I used to celebrate Eid by buying a sheep, wearing new clothes, painting our hands, and buying cookies and chocolates. I cannot fulfill all these things in this country and celebrate Ramadan (she is crying). To some extent, I buy new clothes, chocolate, and juice for my kids during the holidays to keep them from getting sad.

#### **4.2.3.4. Obstacles to education**

Education is an instrument for building a better future. However, participants in the study encountered some barriers to education. The obstacles to education can be classified into two categories: Obstacles that were faced by refugee women and obstacles faced by refugee women's children.

Refugee women place a high value on education, especially the early adult refugee women who hoped for a better future through education. Refugee women intended to continue their education. However, they faced two major barriers to education. The language barrier was one of the main obstacles to education for refugee women. Some refugee women wanted to take short-term courses to expand their job opportunities. Nevertheless, they faced local language barriers in the colleges. The private college that refugee women were registered at taught

students in Amharic. As refugee women were unable to understand Amharic, some of them were forced to stop taking the course. Halima described:

If you don't study, you can't get a job. Just to extend my job opportunities, I tried to study some short-term courses like photography. Then, I went to a private college and got registered. I thought that they would teach us the course in English. However, teachers taught us using the Amharic language instead of English. Everything was in Amharic. I couldn't understand what the teacher was teaching. Due to this reason, I quit studying the course.

The other major barrier to refugee women's educational training was limited income. The limited income affected refugee women's education negatively. Hoping for a better future, refugee women were registered to take short-term courses in private colleges. However, one obstacle they had to overcome was the cost of tuition. Pursuing their educational training at private colleges was too expensive for refugee women. Refugee women could not afford to cover the educational costs at private colleges. As a result, they dropped out of college. Because of their limited income, refugee women could not develop themselves personally and professionally. This left refugee women with no hope for the future. Refugee women's futures became dim. Halima stated:

Since I'm not studying a course I want, I can't get the chance to grow myself. When I was in Yemen, I took so many short-term courses, as a result, I worked in various positions. I was working at the bank. I was a customer service officer; after that, I was a supervisor. The final position was training specialist. I developed myself through coursework, training, and experience. Since I came here for the last four years, I couldn't upgrade myself through education and taking courses. I can't develop myself through

education. I can't say I will be this good in five or three years. I can't say I will have a home, a car, this, and that. I only live for today. I don't know about tomorrow.

Similarly, Leila considered her time in this country to be "lost years" because she could not improve herself through good educational training since moving to Addis Ababa. Leila stated:

I consider the six years that I lived here to be wasted years. It's just a waste of time without a good education and without doing something tangible. The course I took was short-term, which didn't equip me with the necessary knowledge and skills.

Accessing educational trainings was a hurdle not only for refugee women but also for their children. Some refugee women with children reported that one of the obstacles to their children's education was the language barrier, especially in the initial period. Refugee children who attended primary school faced language barriers as the medium of instruction was Amharic. Refugee children struggled with homework, assignments, and preparing for exams. Refugee children were underperforming in their education because of the language barrier. In the end, some of them were forced to drop out. For example, in the initial period, Iman sent her children to a government school. However, they dropped out because her children were unable to understand Amharic. As her children learned a few Amharic words, she sent them to the school again, and they were attending their education at the time of the interview:

Since my children couldn't understand Amharic, they couldn't perform well at school and dropped out. As a result, they blame me. They said that I was the one who brought them to this country. I told them that it was the war that drove us out of our homes. After missing one academic calendar, I let them join the school when they were able to understand Amharic.

Refugee children who attended secondary school also faced language barriers. They used to learn Arabic when they were in their homeland. In Addis Ababa, refugee children encountered language barriers due to the English language being used as the medium of instruction. They performed poorly in their schooling as a result. Refugee women could not help their children when they had exams or homework since some of them were unable to understand English. Refugee women also could not hire tutors for their children since they were financially weak.

Another obstacle to refugee children's education was the schools' reluctance to admit them. According to Article 24(1/2) of the new refugee proclamation, refugees may have access to pre-primary and primary education the same as Ethiopian nationals. Refugees may also have access to secondary and higher education and technical and vocational training with the available resources in the country (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019). However, some government schools were not interested in admitting refugee children. For instance, even though Emani completed all the requirements, the government schools refused to admit her son to the regular program. After several trials, with the assistance of a teacher working in a school, her child was admitted to the school in the extension program:

The government allowed refugees to study, but schools refused. I wanted to educate my son, but government schools refused to do so. My son's educational certificates were sent to me from Yemen by my friends. Since his educational certificate was in Arabic, I translated it into Amharic. I asked that my son be registered at a number of government schools where I went. But they turned him down. After so many trials, my son was enrolled in the extension program because of the assistance of one teacher.

However, Abia, who initially enrolled her children in a private school, did not face what Emani and some other refugee women did. The school admitted her children to enroll without a problem.

According to refugee women with children, interrupted education had a greater impact on their children's education. Since refugee children's education was interrupted because of the war, they did not acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. As a result, refugee children were forced to enter two grades lower than they were before they came to Addis Ababa. Abia stated:

My children entered school two grades lower than they were. One of my sons was a 6th grader when we came to Ethiopia from Yemen. But when he took the 6th-grade entrance exam to get into a private school, he was unable to pass the exam. So, the school admitted him to the 4th grade. This may be because my children went to private schools, but if they had gone to a government school, they would not have been two grades lower.

Prejudice posed another barrier to children's education. Refugee children faced prejudice in school due to language and skin color differences. Refugee children are enrolled with a certain name attached to them. Students and teachers tag the name "Arebu" for refugee boy students and "Arebuwa" for refugee girl students. According to refugee women with children, their children did not feel good when they were singled out. The name alienated refugee children and made them different from their fellow students. Because of this label, refugee children quarrel with their fellow students and even teachers, and later on, some refugee children drop out of school. For instance, Nahir's grandson was not called by his name by his friends and teachers while he was attending school. This annoyed him, and eventually, it was one of the factors that led him to give up on his education:

My little grandson attended a government school in Addis Ababa. One of the teachers always called him "Arabu" instead of his name. My grandson told his teacher and classmates to call him by his name. However, they didn't hear him. My little grandson often used to quarrel with students and teachers about the tags and labels in the school. Finally, because of this reason, my grandson decided to stop his studies and later return to Yemen. Living in Addis Ababa as a refugee makes us feel sad. You have a certain name attached to you. People make you feel lonely. You don't feel good when you are singled out.

Refugee children had a different accent and could not communicate with their fellow students using Amharic correctly as it was their second language. Refugee children were often bullied by students when they spoke the local language. This in turn caused refugee children to clash with their fellow students. For example, when one of Abia's sons enrolled in a government school, he used to clash with students because they laughed at his Amharic language. Then, Abia let her son enroll in a private school with the help of Yemeni rich men. Abia illustrated:

My son used to fight with his fellow students at school because he couldn't speak the language very well. Then, with the help of Yemeni-rich individuals, I enrolled him in a private school (Yemen Community School) in the Merkato neighborhood. In this school, most of the students can speak Arabic, so he can communicate with them.

Some refugee women with children also noted that the quality of education was better at a private school, but the monthly fees were not affordable for them. Thus, most refugee women send their children to government schools because they could not afford private schools.

#### 4.2.3.5. Uncooperative police

The refugee proclamation provided human rights for refugee women. However, Badia and Iman reported that they received little protection from police officers in Addis Ababa. The police officers were reluctant to protect refugee women and their children from harm inflicted on them. Participants also indicated that police officers were unwilling to respond to the cases that they brought to them. If refugee women face problems with Ethiopian citizens in their host country, the police officers did not treat refugee women and Ethiopian citizens equally. The police officers were biased and showed sympathy for their nationals.

Refugee women perceived that they were discriminated against by police officers based on their refugee status and identity. As a result, refugee women felt that they did not belong to the local community. For example, Iman's son was robbed and beaten by thieves. She brought the case to the police. Unfortunately, the police officers were not cooperative in helping her:

My son was beaten, and his teeth were broken. When robbers tried to steal my son's phone, they hit his tooth, and one of his front teeth was broken. When we go to the police and report the case, they don't care about us. They said that our case was not their concern and directed us to go to ARRA. I know that they said this because I'm not Ethiopian. It gave me a strange feeling.

Similarly, Badia thought that the police were hostile toward her and her children. A group of individuals attacked her son in the street. Instead of offering her son protection after she reported the incident to the police, they detained him. Badia narrated the story as follows:

Six months ago, my son was attacked by some guys in the street without any reason. They didn't take anything from him. He had a mobile phone and money. They attacked him with the knife. They cut him under his eyes, and they ran away. It's fine if they were

the thieves who stole his phone. but they were not. I reported the case to the police. I got the medical report from a health center. The police didn't do anything. The police said, "maybe your son had a problem with others". After two months since this incident took place, another problem happened with him. So, I called the police to try to protect us and my son. However, the police came and arrested my son instead of protecting him. Then I reported the case to ARRA. An ARRA official called the police, and the police said that they arrested my son because he was noisy. If my son was noisy, who was always calling the police? I was the one who always complained to the police. So, the police are always against us.

#### **4.2.4. Gender-related Challenges**

Refugee women faced gender-related challenges in Addis Ababa like sexual harassment

##### **4.2.4.1. Sexual Harassment**

In Addis Ababa, some refugee women faced sexual harassment by men in various areas, including on the street, in hospitals, and at work. Some respondents stated that men did not say a woman was young or old when they sexually harassed them. Sexual harassment was exacerbated due to their refugee status and gender.

Some refugee women experienced incidents of sexual harassment while they went to the hospital to seek health services. Some male health professionals were sexually harassing refugee women when they went to hospitals for medical treatment. As a result, some respondents went back to their home without getting medical treatment. For instance, Nahir disclosed her personal experiences of instances of sexual harassment at a hospital as follows:

I went to a hospital when I was sick. When the doctor saw me, he saw me differently and touched my private body. I told the doctor not to add another pain to my already painful life and left that hospital without getting treatment.

While Nahir faced sexual harassment in the hospital, Aisha faced it in her workplace. Aisha experienced sexual harassment while she worked in Merkato (the largest marketplace in Africa). Some men approached her and requested to have sex with her to have a child with her:

Many men at work harassed me. There are business owners who say that they want to marry me or spend one night with me. For example, when I ask them to rent a shop in Merkato, they say that if I am not for them, they will not rent the shop. Or if I slept with them for one night, they would fill the shop with items for selling and give it to me.

Despite Aisha facing harassment in her work place, she continued her work. She said that "I'm trying to pretend and work as if I haven't heard all of these harassments."

## **Chapter Five**

### **Findings on the Social Support Experiences of Refugee Women**

In the prior chapter, I described the adaptation challenges that refugee women faced. The adaptation challenges were complex and interconnected, and they impacted refugee women's well-being negatively. The enhancement of refugee women's well-being depends largely on social support.

Chapter Five describes the social support experiences of refugee women. Specifically, this chapter has three sections. The first section describes the types of social support that refugee women receive from formal support sources, the barriers to accessing the support, their expectations, and their overall perspectives about the type of support they receive from formal support sources. The second section describes the type of support refugee women receive from informal support sources. The third section discusses the meanings attached to being supported by both social support sources.

#### **5.1. Formal Support Sources**

In exile, formal support sources play a paramount role in refugee women's well-being. As per respondents, the main formal support sources were the three refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, including UNHCR, JRS, and Ethiopian Orthodox Church - Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC).

##### **5.1.1. Types of Support**

Refugee women received instrumental support at refugee-serving humanitarian organizations in Addis Ababa, including financial support, material support, training support, medical and educational allowances, and daycare services.

### **5.1.1.1. Financial support**

As per respondents, their main source of financial support was UNHCR. Refugee women received and continue to receive financial support from UNHCR. All respondents were granted cash assistance by UNHCR to cover their basic needs, especially house rent. After respondents finished the registration processes both at RRS and UNHCR and got refugee status, they were referred to UNHCR's implementing partner, EOC-DICAC, for monthly financial support, and they collected money in person. However, EOC-DICAC stopped providing cash assistance to refugee women at the time of the interview.

UNHCR provides financial support to refugee women through the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE). The financial support was given based on family size. At the time of the interview, UNHCR gave refugees 2,100 Birr for the head of the family and 300 Birr for each child. At the time of COVID-19, UNHCR added money for refugees to prevent virus transmission. To purchase hand sanitizers and face masks, UNHCR added 1,000 Birr and 150 Birr to the head of the family each month, respectively. Leila, one of the respondents, expressed her wish that COVID-19 would continue as UNHCR would not reduce funding. She said "It's not simple to make 1150 Birr. Even this extra money does not make our lives easier. Therefore, I wish the Coronavirus was not eliminated."

All refugee women acknowledged the importance of the financial support they received from UNHCR. Most refugee women reported that life in Addis Ababa would be difficult without the financial support of UNHCR. They also indicated that without the support of UNHCR, life in Addis Ababa would be even more difficult for them. Badia indicated, "Without this support, we can't live; we are not here. We appreciate UNHCR's financial support. It helps us at least to continue our lives." Similarly, Leila revealed, "If UNHCR did not give me monthly financial

support, I would either beg on the street or go back to Yemen and die by the war.” Moreover, Abia stated:

I'm not saying UNHCR's financial support didn't help me. At least it filled some of my holes and covered my expenses. I am adding some money to it. Without UNHCR's financial support, it would have been difficult for me to start life from scratch.

Fatim, Emani, Cally, Kalah, Leila, Marya, and Afina specifically indicated that UNHCR's financial support subsidized their house rent. Given that house rent was increasing from time to time in Addis Ababa, UNHCR's financial support played a vital role in subsidizing house rent for refugee women. Respondents indicated that it is painful for them to stretch their hands for help from someone. Fortunately, UNHCR's financial support helped them avoid begging others for help, at least for renting a house. Marya said, “I did not stretch my hand for financial support for house rent so far just because of UNHCR's financial support. So, I would like to say, Alhamdulillah.” Similarly, Kalah reported that UNHCR's financial support helped her live in a rented house with her children, even though the financial support did not cover her full house rent. She said:

A human being is not grateful. Even though I have nothing else to do with the money except house rent, UNHCR's financial support gives me meaning. I pay house rent by adding some money to UNHCR's financial support. At least, I am saved from seeing someone's hand supporting me for house rent. When you are in your house, even if it's a rental house, you can eat corn and sleep. What would have happened to me if I had not received this financial support from UNHCR? I would go out to the streets to beg.

Furthermore, Emani stated that it would be difficult to pay house rent without UNHCR's monthly financial support. She said that without this support, she and her children would have fallen on the street. She was grateful to UNHCR's financial support:

I pay the rent with the money given to me by UNHCR. Rent is very expensive in this country. I fill my stomach by searching here and there. The problem is house rent. The main thing is the sleeping place for the human being. I pay for house rent with the money I get from UNHCR. Whether I felt hungry or thirsty, the house I rented accommodated me. If I didn't get this money from UNHCR, where would I get money to cover house rent? Probably I and my son would be on the street. It helped me.

For Iman, UNHCR's financial support helped her cover some of her expenses for food consumption. She stated, "May Allah bless those who gave us this money with a long life and good health. Even if we don't eat good food, we never sleep without eating. I feed my children with the money I get from UNHCR."

One of the main concerns that refugee women had in common was the UNHCR's inadequate financial support. All refugee women complained about the adequacy of UNHCR's financial support. Refugee women shared that they did not receive adequate cash assistance. They reported that they only needed the financial support from UNHCR to help them fulfill their basic needs. However, the financial support they got from UNHCR was inadequate to cover all of their basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter.

Cally described, "If I got money from UNHCR that helped me pay my house rent and have something to eat and wear, that would be enough for me. But that is not the reality." Halima reported that UNHCR's financial support is minimal, but it helped her to survive on earth. She described, "We don't die because of them. They help us only not to die." Additionally, Kalah

found UNHCR's financial support insufficient even to cover the full cost of a house rent, let alone to cover her monthly food budget:

The money UNHCR gives me is not even enough for rent. I live in a rented house called a studio. The price is 4000 Birr, but UNHCR gives me less than 4000 Birr. So, I have added extra money to cover the rent. In addition, a monthly food budget is extremely difficult to cover. It is difficult to fulfill children's needs only with this money. I pay all the money I earn from UNHCR for rent. If I had a house, the money would be enough for monthly food consumption. I don't even have UNHCR's money in my hand. As soon as I receive the money, I transfer it from my account to the account of the landlord. Even with the addition of more money from my pocket.

All refugee women indicated that UNHCR's financial support did not consider the current cost of living, which made them dissatisfied. When the cost of living increased, UNHCR did not increase financial support for refugee women. For instance, Halima stated that the financial support was supposed to last for two months. However, she finished it in just two weeks due to rising living costs. She said, "UNHCR's financial support is not enough to live. Everything is expensive now. UNHCR gives me money every two months. But I finished the money within two weeks because of the high cost of living."

Respondents claimed that from their registration some years ago up to the time of the interview, they received nearly the same amount of money. The difference was that little money was added during COVID-19 just to prevent virus transmission. Halima reported, "Since I came here, everything (the house rent, transportation, food, etc.) has become expensive from time to time. But UNHCR's financial support is the same, which is ridiculous." Similarly, Nahir stated that the amount of money she received from UNHCR at the time of the interview had not

changed from when she received it 10 years ago. For Nahir, just like the rest of the respondents, she thought that UNHCR's financial support did not consider the rising expense of living:

The financial support does not consider whether the current living costs are high or low.

It is the same amount of money that I received 10 years ago. They do not compensate for the cost of living. How can this money be enough for us living in the city? If we live in a camp, life may not be a problem because they provide everything. But the refugees who live in the city are struggling for survival. There is rent, transportation, and the like.

Refugee women who had children were not happy with the adequacy of the money handed to their children. In a head of a family, a child will receive 300 Birr per month, regardless of whether he or she is beyond the age of 18. Cally described that UNHCR's monthly funding for her son was not enough. She said, "How can UNHCR give only 300 Birr per month to my adult son? What will 300 Birr do for this son?" However, if an adult refugee gets married and presents a certificate of marriage, he or she will receive 2,100 Birr as he or she becomes the family's head.

Based on the data, I understand that some refugee women were registered at RRS and UNHCR in separate families to increase their financial capacity. Leila, Fatim, and Halima were registered at RRS and UNHCR alone in a separate family, despite having family members in Addis Ababa. At RRS and UNHCR, respondents were asked by employees whether they have family or not in Addis Ababa. When they were asked this question, Leila, Fatim, and Halima gave false information, which indicated that they came only independently and had no family members in Addis Ababa. When they registered alone, refugee women were regarded as the head of the family and received the funding allocated for the family head. Leila, Fatim, and Halima got this information from family members who came before them.

Respondents also indicated that some family members whom they knew were also registered in a separate family, as they got information from informal social networks such as friends from ethnic groups and family members. Leila, for instance, got information from her family members who arrived in Addis Ababa before her. Leila's family advised her to register alone rather than with them. She was registered alone and received cash assistance from UNHCR as a head of family:

At RRs and UNHCR, I was registered alone because I had the information from my family. In the past, my mother and my sisters were registered at RRS and UNHCR in the same family and earned little money. So, when I came to this country, they told me to register alone instead of with them. I was registered alone and got financial support from UNHCR allocated for the head of family. My sister and brothers, who came with me, also registered alone.

When Abia and Nahir became aware that some family members registered in a separate family, they went to UNHCR and asked them to register their children who were over 18 years old alone. However, UNHCR did not accept their request. Nahir indicated that she received little money from UNHCR since UNHCR gave her son 300 Birr even though he was an adult. Though she asked UNHCR to register her son as a head of family, she received no response from UNHCR. She claimed that her son should have been considered and received money as a head of family:

My son, being the father of one child himself, is not given money as a head of the family by UNHCR. Of course, he had no marriage certificate. But he should have been considered as head of family. Some family members registered separately to receive money from UNHCR. But, because we were registered as a family, my monthly financial

support from UNHCR became less. I went to UNHCR and asked them to register my son as a head of the family. But UNHCR said no.

Even though it is not legal, some refugee women who had children above the age of 18 at the time of arrival in Addis Ababa described their regret not letting their children register alone. This included refugee women like Cally, Nahir, Abia, and Iman. They stated that if they had the information, they would give false information and let their children register with a different family.

For instance, Cally and her son were registered together as one family. At that time, her son was 21 years old when he came to Addis Ababa. She did not have the information to be registered as a separate family at RRS and UNHCR. She expressed her regret for not letting her son register alone. She recommended that UNHCR should have registered the children over 18 years old separately. Similarly, Iman and her children were registered in the same family at RRS and UNHCR. She was not aware that she could give false information and let her children register in a different family as their age was above 18 years. She regretted not having this information earlier:

I went to ARRA. The employee working in ARRA told me that it would be better if we registered as a family so that my children could go to America or some other countries with me if my case of resettlement is accepted. So, we were registered as one family. My children were mature adults when we came to Addis Ababa. If I and my children had registered separately, we would have received good money. However, I did not have this information. If we had this information, we would have registered separately. I'm disappointed for not letting my children register with a different family and get money.

Some refugee women gave information to newcomers not to register in the same family. For example, Nahir thought that she was fooled when she and her children were registered in RRS and UNHCR. So she told newcomers not to register as a single family. She said, “Since I was registered as one family with my children, the monthly financial support I received became small. I informed new arrivals to register separately when they went to RRS and UNHCR for registration.”

Regarding timeliness, refugee women indicated that UNHCR usually gave them financial support on time, and they were happy because of this. However, sometimes UNHCR deposits the money into their account late. The delay in UNHCR’s financial support for some days caused refugee women to face difficulty paying money for house rent. Most landlords and ladies did not want tenants to delay paying of their rent. When refugee women delayed paying house rent, landlords or ladies usually gave them warnings. If this incident repeated itself several times, landlords or ladies would evict them. To avoid this, refugee women borrowed money from someone and paid the required money to the landlords or ladies before the due date passed.

For example, Kalah borrowed money from her friends and paid her rent when the financial support from UNHCR was delayed. She indicated, “Sometimes UNHCR’s financial support delays. During this time, I borrowed money from my friends to pay my rent. I will repay the loan to my friends when I receive the financial support from UNHCR.” Despite the delayed financial support in some instances, all refugee women reported that they did not miss it for a single month, which delighted them.

UNHCR provided refugee women with two months of cash assistance once. However, most refugee women (Nahir, Marya, Leila, Aisha, Iman, and Afina) were against UNHCR’s approach for two reasons. First, most payments were made every month rather than every two

months. They stated that many things in this country were paid monthly, including house rent, school fees, and the like. So, they needed to be given funds every month rather than every two months.

The second reason was that some refugee women did not have a saving culture. When UNHCR gave them two months of money at once, they finished it quickly. Cash assistance was supposed to be given for two months. But they spent the money early and became empty-handed throughout the two months. This, in turn, negatively impacted their house rent. They lost the money to pay for house rent.

For example, Marya stated that her money management is poor. She did not save the money. She finished the money given to her quickly in the first month and faced difficulty paying house rent for the second month. She said, “It is not good to be given two months of money once. As I have no saving habit, I will run out of money in the first month and struggle to pay house rent for the second month.” However, for a refugee woman such as Kalah, giving two months of cash assistance once did not matter because she had the skill of saving money:

I have seen many things in my life, so I save money that is given to me and try to use it properly. It does not matter to me whether the cash assistance is given every one or two months.

Refugee women also shared their thoughts about the accessibility of UNHCR’s financial support. As per respondents, they faced hassles when they went to support providers to receive some type of support. The long and tedious bureaucratic system discouraged refugee women from using some types of support at refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. However, for Iman, Kalah, Leila, and Marya, the financial support from UNHCR was easy and hassle-free. They did not knock on the door of UNHCR every month to get financial support. They stated

that once they were registered, UNHCR easily transferred the money to their account. Kalah described:

The support that did not force me to see someone's face is UNHCR's financial support. We are not even told that it will not be given to you next month. We get this support regularly. I went to UNHCR. They asked me to give them my bank account. Then I gave it to them, and they were able to deposit it into my bank account every two months. So, this is the support that I can easily access.

In a similar vein, Marya stated:

We will not go to UNHCR's office, whether the money comes or not. When they deposit the money in our account, we will receive a message on our mobile phone. We do not face challenges in getting the money from UNHCR, unlike other supports provided by other organizations. We do not knock on their doors repeatedly. We can easily access the support. I'm happy with it.

#### **5.1.1.2. Material support**

Refugee women received material support from humanitarian organizations working with refugees, such as food rations and bedding, hygiene materials, and milk powder.

**Food ration and bedding.** All respondents except Afina reported that they received food rations and bedding from JRS. Refugee women received food rations such as rice, macaroni, spaghetti, cooking oil, and bedding, particularly blankets and mattresses. Respondents acknowledged the importance of this support. Badia described, "I feel happy with this support. I had only one blanket. When the weather becomes cold, I wear a jacket, socks, and everything else to be warm at night. When I received the blanket from JRS, I was happy."

However, the support was not frequent. Once a refugee woman received this type of support, she had to wait until other refugees and asylum-seekers took it. The next round to receive this type of support took a long time unless the refugee or asylum-seeker had chronic health problems. For instance, Cally indicated that “JRS gave me flour, spaghetti, and macaroni. JRS also gave me a blanket. When all the Yemeni refugees have received these grants, I will receive a second round of grants. This may take two or three years.” Respondents described that they wanted this type of support to be frequent and continuous. For Aisha, JRS’s food ration and bedding support were not a kind of support for her. She said that “Occasional support like food rations and bedding is not support for me. Support for me is the thing that can sustain me and is given frequently.”

According to respondents, the frequency of receiving food rations and bedding becomes limited because of the large number of refugees. The influx of refugees has hurt their support. Due to the influx of refugees, respondents did not receive food rations and bedding regularly. Most of the respondents received food rations and bedding at JRS only one time during their stay in Addis Ababa.

For instance, Iman stated, “I have received blankets, food oil, and rice only once from JRS in six years. I have never received such support again. The support is not frequently given to me.” Similarly, Kalah indicated, “I have taken blankets and oil a long time ago from JRS. It takes a lot of time to receive this kind of support because there are so many refugees.” Only Aisha received this type of support twice in her seven-years stay in Addis Ababa:

JRS has supported me twice in seven years. My husband and I recently got divorced. So, I had no money. The members of the Yemeni committee registered my name because

they know who is in need and who needs urgent support. They transferred my name to JRS. Then, JRS gave me a food ration for the second time recently.

Previously, JRS itself selected refugees and asylum-seekers and provided food and bedding. However, at the time of the interview, JRS changed its delivery system and provided it through community leaders. Each refugee nationality had its community leaders. JRS selected two Yemeni community leaders for the Yemeni refugee community. Two of the selected community leaders were members of the Yemeni refugee community.

Refugee women were told to contact their respective community leaders by JRS to access food, a blanket, and a mattress. It was through community leaders that refugees were able to get support. Every refugee and asylum-seeker was eligible to get this type of support. However, JRS's emergency assistance was given first to those who were sick and had a large family size. Based on the community leaders' selection, JRS provided support.

**Hygiene materials.** Respondents indicated that one of their sources for hygiene material support was EOC-DICAC. EOC-DICAC provided refugee women with laundry soap, a sanitary pad every month, and underwear every three months. At EOC-DICAC, the one who had been working as an interpreter informed them via WhatsApp when hygiene items were ready to be given, and they went there and picked them up. The second source of hygiene material support for refugee women was JRS. Refugee women received laundry soap, female sanitary pad, and toothbrushes and soap at JRS every month.

Refugee women were grateful for the hygiene material support. Respondents stated that both EOC-DICAC and JRS covered some of the costs that they would incur for buying sanitary pads and laundry soap, which gave them financial relief. Iman said, "DICAC gives me soap and a female sanitary pad every month. I am relieved of at least buying sanitary pads." In a similar

vein, Kalah described that although the hygiene items she received did not fully meet her needs, the support subsidized her:

I use two laundry soaps a month. A soap I get from DICAC covers the cost of one laundry soap. So, I say that it will not cover my expenses completely, but it subsidizes me. One laundry soap every month is not enough. We wash our clothes at least twice a month. How can one laundry soap for a month be enough? I don't wash utensils with laundry soap. I don't wash my body and hair with it. Hygiene includes many things. Dish soap is needed, hair shampoo is needed, and body soap is needed. So even if it doesn't help me to cover all my sanitary expenses completely, the hygiene material supports and subsidizes me.

Most of the participants described that the hygiene items they received from EOC-DICAC and JRS were not adequate. In addition, some of the refugee women raised issues about the hygiene material support. One of the issues was the delay in receiving the support. Sometimes EOC-DICAC and JRS provided refugee women with hygiene materials that were not timely. Because of the delay, some refugee women (Leila, Halima, Iman, and Marya) were forced to purchase hygiene items with their own money to maintain their hygiene.

The second issue was the quality of the hygiene materials. Both Nahir and Aisha raised the quality issue with the hygiene items they received at humanitarian organizations. They stated that they received low-quality hygiene items. According to respondents, the poor-quality hygiene items caused pain in their bodies. For example, Nahir described, "The soap humanitarian organizations provide is low quality, and it is a very cheap soap. The quality of the female sanitary items they provide is also low. It causes allergic reactions in my body, and it is not safe." Moreover, Nahir was not comfortable with the size of the underwear she received from

EOC-DICAC. The size of the underwear she received did not fit her. She stated, “They provide me underwear. But they provide me with a very small size. As an organization, they should have known the size of the refugee they intended to provide.”

If a refugee woman and her children were registered in the same family, both JRS and EOC-DICAC only provided hygiene materials to the mother (head family), not to the children. About this, Aisha complained that both JRS and EOC-DICAC did not provide sanitary pads to her daughter. She described, “They did not provide sanitary support to my daughter. My daughter has grown up. But they don’t care about my daughter. Why does this happen?”

**Milk powder.** Some participants reported that every month, EOC-DICAC gave milk powder to refugee women with infants between the ages of six months and two years. EOC-DICAC bought milk powder and gave it to refugee women with toddler-aged refugees. At the time of the interview, this type of support only concerned Afina and Nahir, as they had children under 2 years old. Nahir had a granddaughter under the age of 2 years. Despite Nahir trying her best, she could not get this kind of support from EOC-DICAC.

Since my granddaughter was born recently, I went and asked EOC-DICAC about providing milk powder for her. But they said, Wait. When I went there for the second time, they told me that her file did not reach them, so they would not give me milk powder. I asked them twice, and they gave the same answer, so I stopped asking. That's what they want. I'm tired, so I leave them.

#### **5.1.1.3. Training support**

Refugee women received some skill training support from humanitarian organizations working with refugees, including language training, computer training, and technical and vocational training.

**Language Training.** As per respondents, JRS provided a short-term English language course to interested refugees. Some of the refugee women received language training from JRS. They got pens and notebooks during the training. Refugee women used to receive 150 Birr for a transportation allowance. However, at the time of the interview, the organization increased the transportation allowance and paid them 300 Birr per month.

Due to the economic deprivation, some refugee women did not use the transportation allowance for only transportation purposes. They also used it to fulfill petty items. They walked a long way on their feet to save money and used the remaining money to top up their mobile phones and purchase different things like bread, vegetables, and the like. Marya stated, “I used to top up my phone with the money that was given to me for transportation and cover some of my small expenses.” Similarly, Cally shared, “JRS gave us a transportation allowance when we took language training. I didn't spend all the money they gave me on transportation. I walk halfway and use the remaining money to buy onions and other petty items.”

Respondents took English language training for different purposes. For instance, Cally and Kalah were registered to take the language training, hoping that they would get the opportunity to go abroad using UNHCR's resettlement program. Other respondents, such as Leila and Marya, were enrolled in JRS's language class to expand their job opportunities.

Respondents who took the language training described that they did not get what they expected from the training in terms of the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Refugee women expected that the language training would improve their English language skills. However, it did not. Refugee women were not equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills of the English language for four reasons.

The first reason was that the period of training was short. The language class was given only twice a week for an hour and completed within a few months. This inhibited refugee women's practice and rehearsal of the language. Leila described "We only studied twice a week. I could not improve my English language skills by only studying it for one hour twice a week. On top of that, the language class was completed within a few months."

The second reason was the mode of delivery of the language class. The language class was not given to them based on their level of English language skills. The course was not designed for beginners, intermediate, or advanced levels. The teacher merged those refugee women who had some skills in the language with those who did not have any language skills at all. Refugee women who did not know the basics of English were disadvantaged because the teacher always went with the pace of individuals who had some skills. Because of this, refugee woman like Marya could not improve her English language skills. She said:

JRS taught students who had little knowledge of English with students who didn't know English in one class. The teacher asks only the students who have some knowledge and leaves the rest. Without acquiring knowledge, the teacher said that the training was over.

The third reason was the teachers' limited skills in the English language. Halima described that instead of sitting at home, she was registered to take an English language class at JRS. However, she was not satisfied with the teacher who gave the course:

I took the language training provided in JRS. Despite knowing the English language, I took this training because I was free. However, teachers were not perfect. I did not get good skills out of the training. Some years ago, they had very good teachers, but now they don't have.

The fourth reason was a lack of concentration. Refugee women took the language class with half a heart. They could not concentrate on the language class because they were preoccupied with thoughts of how to lead their economic lives. Cally stated:

Since we are preoccupied with many thoughts about how to lead our economic lives, it is a little difficult for us to attend such training. When I took the training, sometimes I was thinking about leaving for a place where I could get money rather than spending my time attending the training. As a result, I couldn't take the necessary knowledge and skills from the language training.

However, with all the limitations, Kalah gave her advice for young refugees to take short-term language classes for free provided at JRS instead of wasting their time sitting at home.

**Computer training.** Refugee women stated that they received short-term computer courses from JRS. English language proficiency was required at JRS before enrolling in computer training. Refugee women received a 300 Birr transport allowance every month until they finished the training at the time of the interview. If refugee women take the language and computer training on different days, JRS will give them 600 Birr. But if refugee women take both language and computer classes on the same day, JRS will give them only 300 Birr.

Those who took the language training were delighted to acquire some knowledge of computers. However, they still did not implement the training at the workplace that invited them. Some participants did not take computer training at JRS for different reasons. For instance, Marya did not take computer classes because she thought that there would be no place for her that required skills in computers. On the other hand, Nahir did not take computer training because the level of training that JRS was giving was the same as the one she had. She said, "I don't want to take computer training at JRS because it's not advanced training." Afina and Emani

did not take the computer training at JRS due to a lack of information about the training schedule.

**Technical and vocational training.** Respondents reported that they had two sources of technical and vocational training support: JRS and EOC-DICAC. JRS provided refugee women with short-term technical and vocational courses in collaboration with Nifas Silk Polytechnic College. Refugee women were selected through JRS and trained at Nifas Silk Polytechnic College. Among the respondents, Kalah and Cally were trained in tailoring, sponsored by JRS.

Just like JRS, some refugee women also received technical and vocational training in private colleges and government polytechnic colleges with the financial sponsorship of EOC-DICAC. While Iman, Kalah, and Abia were trained in catering, Leila and Marya were trained in tailoring. As per respondents, EOC-DICAC gave them a transportation allowance during their technical and vocational skills training.

As per respondents, both JRS and EOC-DICAC usually gave refugee women a one-time chance to get training in technical and vocational skills. However, if there is a vacant place, JRS and EOC-DICAC may allow the refugees to get the training. For example, while Marya was trained in design, Leila was trained in mobile maintenance, despite being trained in tailoring at first. Kalah was the only participant who was sponsored to get vocational training by both JRS and EOC-DICAC.

Refugee women like Iman, Kalah, Cally, and Abia chose technical and vocational training based on their prior experiences and were trained in the vocations they needed. For example, Kalah said, “I chose to be trained in catering because I had cooking experience before. Catering was the vocation I wanted to take.” On the other hand, Leila and Marya reported that the technical and vocational training options were limited and that they were not trained in the

vocations they wanted. They described that they took tailoring training with the thought that it would be preferable to take a certain training than to sit idle. As Leila described:

The training options were limited. There were only 3 options: hairdressing, cooking, and tailoring. The three training options were not in my interest. I was trained in tailoring among these given options. But I took this training instead of sitting at home. What I wanted to study was graphics. But graphics were not given in the polytechnic college.

Article 26(4) of the new refugee proclamation indicated that refugees could engage in projects designed jointly by the international community and the Ethiopian government to benefit both refugees and Ethiopian nationals in small and micro enterprises (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2019). Ethiopian nationals were trained in technical and vocational training with refugee women. Since refugees could not be issued business licenses, Ethiopian nationals obtain business licenses, and both work together.

Once refugee women and Ethiopian nationals completed their vocational training, JRS organized both refugees and Ethiopians in small and micro enterprises. Usually, the organization has a group of five members: four refugees and one Ethiopian national. Then, RRS issued a residence permit. The residence permit is regularly renewed every five years, just like a refugee identity card. JRS lets refugee women prepare a business plan. Many small and micro enterprises prepared their business plans and competed with each other. The one that won the competition was given the initial capital by JRS and started working. However, members of small and micro enterprises that won the competition faced challenges of inadequate start-up capital and securing a place to work.

Those refugee women who took technical and vocational training thanked both JRS and EOC-DICAC for giving them the chance to be trained in some vocations and acquire some

knowledge and skills. However, they were disappointed when they became unemployed. Despite receiving technical and vocational training, they were not employed in their fields. This consequently had a detrimental impact on refugee women as well as their family members' economic well-being. Kalah stated:

I am glad that DICAC allowed me to take training in catering. But I haven't been able to work on it yet, either employed or on my own. Maybe in the future, if I get the chance, I will work and benefit. In this regard, it is worthless. I feel bad. I have gained only some knowledge and skills.

Most of the refugee women could not apply the trainings for some reasons. The first reason was refugee status. Abia described that she could not get the job in the vocation she was trained in due to her refugee status. She said, "DICAC covered my expenses and I took catering training. But when I went to hotels seeing their vacancy announcement, they told me that they would not hire foreigners. They told me that I cannot work with my identity card."

The second reason was the lack of initial capital. The refugee women attempted to start their own businesses after finding limited employment opportunities. To establish a livelihood for themselves, they needed to have some startup capital. Iman, Abia, Lelila, and Marya stated that they lost the start-up capital to begin their own business. The third reason was not being able to get a business license. Those refugee women who raised some initial capital faced the problem of obtaining a business license. Kalah reported that EOC-DICAC helped her train in catering, and she was grateful for that. Nevertheless, the vocational training she received did not fill her stomach so far because she was not able to get a business license:

Although the profession I trained in is good, I have not been able to work on it and fill my stomach because the situation has not yet allowed it. Catering requires issuing a

business license. For over a year, I have been struggling to get this thing done. But it didn't happen. It annoyed me.

Among the refugee women who took technical and vocational training, only Leila and Marya were employed after completing their training. These refugee women worked as tailors at garment factories. But Leila and Marya quit their jobs due to the low pay.

#### **5.1.1.4. Medical allowance**

Refugee women received health services at public health centers and hospitals with the medical expenses covered by EOC-DICAC. Most of the respondents could not cover their medical expenses since they were financially weak. Given their financial difficulties, refugee women got financial relief as EOC-DICAC covered their medical costs. Refugee women acknowledged the medical allowance provided by the EOC-DICAC.

For example, Afina stated, “I don't know what I would have done if DICAC had not covered my medical expenses. If DICAC hadn't covered my medical expenses, I would have died when I gave birth to two of my children.” Similarly, Emani described, “What would have happened if I had not received DICAC's medical support? Without DICAC's medical support, I would have been vulnerable to disease. I have no family. This organization is my family. I thank them very much.” For refugee women who have chronic illnesses like Kalah, EOC-DICAC covered the cost of her medicine for blood pressure and heart attacks. It would be difficult to cover the cost of these medicines given Kalah's economic weakness:

When I get sick, I go to government medical facilities for treatment. Getting medical treatment in government health facilities needed money. If DICAC didn't cover these expenses, where would I bring this money? I have no job. In this case, it would have been very difficult without DICAC's support. Now there is a medicine that I take regularly for

blood pressure and heart attack. If DICAC had not helped me, where would I have brought this money to purchase medicine? If I hadn't had that support, where would I have been able to get treatment?

According to participants, previously they got medical treatment from a private hospital called Migbare Senay General Hospital. However, at the time of the interview, they were accessing medical services from government health centers and hospitals. EOC-DICAC uses the approach that refugee women could go and get treatment at government health centers or hospitals using their own money. Then, EOC-DICAC will refund the money to refugee women.

EOC-DICAC's approach brought two challenges for refugee women. First, refugee women lost money to pay for their medical treatment at government health centers or hospitals. They complained that they did not have money available that helped them cover their medical treatment. The second challenge was the delay in refunding the money by EOC-DICAC. Some refugee women (Cally, Kalah, Afina, and Aisha) who secured the money and paid it to the government hospitals for their medical treatment faced a delay in getting their money back from EOC-DICAC. Kalah shared, "When I get treatment at a government hospital and go to DICAC to receive the money, sometimes they say that 'there is no budget at the moment and come back a few days later'. They delay some days and finally give me the money."

Refugee women also indicated that previously they used to purchase prescribed medicine from any pharmacy. However, at the time of the interview, EOC-DICAC changed its system and instructed refugee women to purchase only from Saint Mark Pharmacy, which was found in the Sidist Kilo neighborhood. When a medicine was prescribed at a government hospital or health center, refugee women took the prescription paper to EOC-DICAC. Then, EOC-DICAC wrote another paper and sent refugee women to Saint Mark Pharmacy with the prescription paper.

If a prescribed medicine is below 800 Birr and available at Saint Mark Pharmacy, refugee women will take it. But if the price of the prescribed medicine is more than 800 Birr or the prescribed medicine is not available from the pharmacy, refugee women go back to EOC-DICAC. When this happens, EOC-DICAC will buy the prescribed medicine elsewhere and give it to the patient. According to respondents, the approach by which EOC-DICAC purchased medicine and supplied it to them had three challenges.

First, EOC-DICAC did not purchase and supply the medicine on time. The delay in purchasing and supplying medicine disappointed refugee women. As per respondents, they might have to wait a long time until EOC-DICAC calls them to take the prescribed medicine. This was problematic for refugee women who had serious illnesses that needed medicine immediately. It forced patients who were in critical condition to suffer a lot until they got the medicine from EOC-DICAC. For refugee women who had no one to support them and were in critical health conditions, it was difficult to go through this whole process. Even for a refugee woman who had someone to assist, EOC-DICAC's approach was difficult because no one took care of the patient when the patient's caregiver left the hospital to bring the medicine from Saint Markos Pharmacy. The caregiver would give emotional support to the patient if the caregiver bought the medicine from the nearby pharmacy instead of going to EOC-DICAC to bring the medicine.

For instance, Marya described her experience with EOC-DICAC's medical allowance when her sister was sick and admitted to the hospital. Since the course of getting the prescribed medicine from EOC-DICAC took a long time, Marya was not satisfied with EOC-DICAC's approach. Going here and there to get the medicine was hectic and tedious for Marya:

It was very difficult for me when my sister got sick. My sister was admitted to the hospital. I had to go to DICAC to take the medicine when the doctors ordered her to take

it. I received the prescription paper from the doctor and went to DICAC. After DICAC, I went to Saint Markos Pharmacy and then brought the medicine to the doctor. It was just a hard time. In the past, we used to buy the medicine from the nearby pharmacy and take a receipt for DICAC. But that was not the case at the time. She was lying in bed because she was in critical condition. She was a person who was on the verge of death. How can she wait until I bring the medicine from DICAC?

The second challenge was that the medicine that EOC-DICAC bought and provided to them was low quality medicine. Some respondents thought that EOC-DICAC bought low quality medicine and gave it to them. For example, Marya stated, “EOC-DICAC bought us low quality medicine that was not effective just to save their money.”

The third challenge was that sometimes EOC-DICAC staff may not be available in their office, or they might have entered their office late. During this time, refugee women were told to wait until the staff got into the office. Nahir stated, “In addition to our disease, the absence of staff in their office became another disease for us.” Due to the aforementioned challenges, Nahir decided to stop EOC-DICAC’s medical allowance. This, in turn, forced Nahir to incur unnecessary costs while she was trying to get medical services at a private hospital. She said:

It’s been a long time since I stopped using the DICAC medical service. Whenever I get sick, I go to private clinics and get treatment there. I was forced to take such action because I gave up on them. I know doing this thing costs me a lot in terms of finances.

Except for Abia, the rest of the respondents were not happy with EOC-DICAC’s ambulatory service. As per respondents, those people who gave ambulance service did not pick up their phone when they gave them a call. Sometimes refugee women were fortunate and got the ambulance via phone. However, the ambulance did not arrive quickly. Refugee women did

not access the ambulance service immediately when they got sick. Nahir stated, “The ambulance arrives only after a refugee dies.” Moreover, refugee women reported that the ambulance service gave little service to refugees unless the individuals who provided the service knew them.

Furthermore, when the ambulance became busy, refugee women were told by individuals who provided ambulance services that they could go to health centers using taxis and would pay their transport costs. However, at times, refugee women lacked the money to pay for transportation to go to the health center for medical treatment. Cally described:

Better not talk about the ambulance. They cannot come to us when someone is on the verge of dying. They say to take a taxi and you will be paid, but how can we pay for a taxi since we are poor? There is an ambulance that the organization has allowed us to use. However, when we call the ambulance phone number, sometimes they never answer our call.

Similarly, when Marya’s sister got sick, she needed urgent medical care. She called EOC-DICAC to give her ambulance service. However, they told her to take her sister to the nearest government hospital using a taxi service, and they would cover the cost of the taxi service:

I called DICAC when my sister got sick and told them to take her to the hospital using an ambulance. She said, ‘Where is your house?’ I called her Piassa. She told me to take my sister to Ras Desta Hospital, which is near the Piassa neighborhood. She told me to take my sister to the hospital using a taxi, and they would cover the cost of the taxi. I didn't just want her to tell me about the hospital and to cover the cost of transport. They should take my sister to the hospital with me using an ambulance. At that time, I felt very bad.

Contrary to most respondents, Abia was satisfied with EOC-DICAC’s ambulance service and described her experience as follows:

One day, when I was having trouble with bleeding from my nose, I called the DICAC ambulance. Then they came from the place where I was and took me to the hospital. So their ambulance service is good for me. Another day, when I called the ambulance, they told me to go to the nearest medical facility and get treatment because they were at work during that time.

EOC-DICAC did not accept receipts or medical board decisions if refugee women brought it from private health hospitals or health centers for their medical treatment. EOC-DICAC accepted only receipts from government health centers or hospitals. For instance, Kalah shared her experiences as follows:

I suffered a ruptured spinal cord due to a car accident. Zewditu Hospital sent me a referral to Black Lion Hospital. The damage was so severe that I needed urgent surgery. If not, the doctors at Zewditu Hospital told me that I might be paralyzed. But when I went to the Black Lion, they told me that the medical device was broken, but specialists were there. They told me that there is no medication for the disease; just wait by using pain relievers. Then I came to DICAC and told them. They told me that 'if you brought the Black Lion Medical Board decision, we would take you abroad and help you get treatment'. When I went to Black Lion Hospital and asked them, they said that they were not interested in giving me a board decision. When I asked them why, they said that there were specialists. I went to a private hospital, was examined, and brought the medical board decision to EOC-DICAC. I was told by DICAC that it must be a government hospital board decision. DICAC said that it was not possible, so I just sat down. Thanks to Allah, I have not been paralyzed yet.

Similarly, due to the long queue in one of the government hospitals in Addis Ababa, Nahir went to a private hospital for medical treatment. Her daughter paid for the medical treatment in the private hospital, and she got medical treatment. When she requested EOC-DICAC to refund the money, they said they could not return the money as she was getting medical treatment from a private hospital:

Once, I got sick with a liver infection, and my daughter took me and covered my medical treatment at a private hospital. When I asked them to return the money I used to get treatment at the private hospital, DICAC told me that they would not cover my expenses because I was treated in a private hospital. If I had gone to the government hospital, I would have died before I could get to the queue. Illness does not distinguish between a private or government hospital.

Sometimes government health centers or hospitals may refer refugee women to get tested or examined in private diagnostic centers when their testing centers become disabled. During this time, refugee women brought the referral paper to EOC-DICAC. Then, EOC-DICAC gave refugee women a letter to get the required testing or examination in private diagnostic centers, depending on the refugee women's illness. If a blood test was ordered, refugee women were instructed only to go to Arsho Medical Laboratory, whereas if an X-ray was ordered, they were instructed only to go to Wudassie Diagnostic Center. Refugee women reported that it was good to get tested or examined at these private testing centers because the test or examination results reached them quickly. When the test or examination results arrive quickly, the doctors will immediately prescribe medicine or do the necessary treatment for them.

All respondents complained about the quality of health services provided by government health centers or hospitals. They said that government health centers and hospitals' health

services were unsatisfactory. Halima stated, “The government hospitals in Addis Ababa are so bad. When we go to them, we don’t get proper service. They provide poor services.” Similarly, Afina said, “Government health services are poor. My pain is different; the medicine they gave me is different.” Moreover, Iman got sick and went to one of the government health centers in Addis Ababa. She said that without getting proper medical treatment, the doctor ordered her medicine to be taken, which made her vulnerable to gastric problems. Due to this reason, she was afraid to go to government health centers again:

I got sick and went to the government health center, but the medicine they gave me was not good. Without examining me, without telling me what my disease is, without conducting a blood test, the doctor just gives me medicine. The medicine I took damaged my stomach. Ingesting an ineffective drug made me sicker, so I threw it away. You pay a little money at government health centers, and then you come home with a lot of diseases. Because of this, I am not going to the health center again. The health center examination is not satisfactory. Why would I kill myself by going to a government health center again?

Refugee women indicated that there is a long queue in government health centers and hospitals. Refugee women also complained that there was a long waiting and appointment time at government health centers and hospitals. They stated that the tests or examinations at government health centers and hospitals were not finished in a short period. The doctors might make another appointment. When refugees arrive on the appointed date, the doctor may be changed. Another doctor ordered them to get some examinations again. That was a problem for most refugee women. Halima described, “I observed that there is a long waiting line in the

hospital. We didn't see the doctor immediately. Someone may die before he or she gets proper health services due to the long process.”

In general, most refugee women were not satisfied with the quality and overall long process of getting medical services at government health centers and hospitals. They preferred to get medical treatment from private health centers and hospitals. Marya reported, “We used to get medical treatment in Migbare Seny. But now we get medical treatment in government health centers or hospitals. What we had before was better. Government health centers or hospitals' medical treatment is not good.” In a similar vein, Kalah described, “It would be better if we got medical treatment in private health centers and hospitals. I feel bad that this did not happen.”

#### **5.1.1.5. Educational allowance**

Some refugee women reported that they received an educational allowance from EOC-DICAC to cover the expense of their children's educational materials and uniforms. Participants indicated that they received 1,950 Birr for one academic calendar for purchasing educational material and uniforms from EOC-DICAC. According to respondents, every student who pursues education, from preschool (kindergarten) to secondary school, is eligible to receive this type of support.

Among the respondents, Iman, Emani, Badia, Aisha, Afina, and Abia had children who pursued their education below grade 12. Refugee women whose children pursued their education below grade 12 acknowledged the educational material support they receive. Specifically, respondents like Iman, Badia, and Abia were happy with the educational allowance of EOC-DICAC. For instance, Iman indicated, “Buying educational materials for my children is difficult for me because of the high cost of living. DICAC alleviated this problem for me to some extent.”

Participants in the study also reported that EOC-DICAC provided an educational allowance to a student, whether he or she attended a government or private school. EOC-DICAC did not cut the educational allowance for government school students, despite students getting assistance from the government. Addis Ababa city administration covered the cost of students' uniforms and educational materials that are enrolled at government schools. Since the city administration covered Abia's children's uniforms and educational materials, she used the money received from EOC-DICAC to cover petty expenses. Abia illustrated:

The government gives my children uniforms and school supplies. DICAC does not cut off educational support, whether a student attends a government school or not. I am happy with this. I spend the money DICAC gives me for my children's educational allowance on other miscellaneous things.

To receive an education allowance, a refugee parent should present evidence that indicates a student is enrolling in the school each semester. EOC-DICAC provided educational support only if the parent brought proof from the school where the student was studying.

However, Aisha was not happy with EOC-DICAC's approach:

Due to the DICAC's bureaucracy, for two years, I refrained from using the DICAC's educational allowance for my children. DICAC requested that I bring a letter from the school where my children are enrolled stating whether or not my students are enrolling each semester. I gave them the first semester. But they requested the second semester as well. I told them that I had given them already. However, they do not want to hear and understand me. As a result, I gave up using the support.

#### **5.1.1.6. Day Care and Other Services**

Refugee women received daycare services at JRS. One of the participants in the study, Afina, reported that she received daycare services at JRS. However, Afina indicated that daycare services were not able to provide full services like sleeping homes. As a result, she stopped using the service.

In addition, JRS provided refugees with various forms of services (sports, musical instruments, a library, and the internet). However, as per respondents, these services targeted more young refugees than them. Fatim stated:

JRS services like sports, musical instruments, libraries, and internet access for refugees are important, especially for youth. Youth have not been placed to spend when they do have time. But here there is sport, language, education, music, computers, and the like. Even for parents. Most refugees have children; where do they put their children if this organization does not exist? So, it is a good place for them.

JRS in general and its cafeteria in particular were places for socialization for Emani and Iman. JRS helped them build networks with their ethnic-like communities, find friends, and provide a place to talk about their problems. Emani enjoyed it when she went to JRS and met people who shared the same problem with her. She made friends and played with them. She described:

When I go to JRS, I'm so glad. I found my people, got together with them, and had a good time with refugees who come from different countries. When I go to JRS, my mind was refreshed. Talking, laughing, and playing with your people (refugees) is a big thing in itself.

As per the participants of the study, there was a women's association established by JRS. The association was established before COVID-19. The women's association stopped working due to COVID-19. Then it was resumed at the time of the interview. According to respondents, every month, members from different countries make coffee and introduce their culture to the other refugee population. As per Kalah, it is a good platform for refugees from different countries to get to know each other. However, she was not pleased with some members of the women's association. She stated, "I am not happy with some members of the association. Some members are nasty. Our time is wasted when we talk about nothing serious."

Refugee women like Nahir, Aisha, Leila, and Abia joined the association. But they left the association because they thought that the association did nothing for them. For instance, Leila described, "After seeing them one day, I never joined the group again. They simply come together without doing anything." Similarly, Abia indicated that the association wasted her time and that she had no plan to rejoin the association.

### **5.1.2. Barriers to Accessing Support from Formal Support Sources**

The analysis that follows highlights several constituents or themes, including language barriers, lack of availability of knowledge about the existing support packages, high transportation costs, support providers' unfriendly treatment, unmet survival needs, childcare responsibility, failure to give a timely response by support providers, community leaders' unfair recruitment, and a biased attitude. The constituents or themes help to advance understanding of barriers to accessing social support at humanitarian organizations in the Addis Ababa context.

#### **5.1.2.1. Language barriers**

One of the barriers for respondents to accessing support from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations was language. Refugee-serving humanitarian organizations in Addis

Ababa offered services in Amharic, the country's official language, and English. Humanitarian organizations also assisted participants in Arabic, which is their mother tongue. Since a few refugee women could not understand the local and English languages, volunteer refugees provided interpretation services to them at humanitarian organizations. However, the volunteer refugees' numbers were small. When refugee women requested them, interpreters were either unavailable or overloaded.

For example, EOC-DICAC worked with volunteer refugees for interpretation services. To ease refugees' communication with employees at EOC-DICAC and health professionals at health centers, volunteer refugees do interpretation work for Arabic-speaking refugees, including Yemenis. The number of volunteer refugees working at EOC-DICAC was only two at the time of the interview. As per respondents, interpreters could not handle many refugees at a time. Since their numbers were small, refugee women could not access them whenever they wanted to go to government health centers or hospitals to seek services. For refugee women, not being able to understand both Amharic and English was a major barrier to accessing health services. The language barrier made it difficult for refugee women to communicate with health professionals and navigate the system. Additionally, it was difficult for refugee women to communicate their needs to health professionals. Leila indicated:

The problem I had when I went to the health center was lack of interpreters. I couldn't find an interpreter. DICAC had a few interpreters. But because they are few in number, they do not accompany us to health centers when we need them. Interpreters hired by DICAC interpret for refugees staying at DICAC and sometimes at the hospital. They do not provide interpretation services for every refugee by going from one hospital to another hospital. So I had a problem with an interpreter. Because I did not know the

language, I was unable to explain my illness to the doctors. As a result, I'm suffering from diseases.

English language proficiency was required at JRS before enrolling in computer training. A couple of refugee women faced a challenge while they were trying to receive computer training at JRS. For example, Iman and Leila were not proficient in English which prevented them from participating in the computer training. Leila shared, "I wanted to get computer training but failed the entrance exam twice, so I couldn't get trained. I can use computers in Arabic rather than English."

Both JRS and EOC-DICAC provided skills training opportunities for refugee women to enroll in technical and vocational fields at either government or private polytechnic colleges. However, because English was the primary language of instruction in such colleges, refugee women encountered language barriers when pursuing technical and vocational training. Leila stated:

EOC-DICAC sponsored me to be trained in tailoring. The medium of instruction was English. I couldn't understand what the teacher said. My fellow friends who could understand English and Arabic helped me by translating some words, and I was able to finish the course.

#### **5.1.2.2. Lack of availability of knowledge about the existing support packages**

Some respondents were not aware of some of the support packages that were offered by humanitarian organizations working with refugees. The language barriers exacerbated the lack of availability of knowledge about the existing support packages. This is common for newcomers during the initial period. Even though some participants lived in Addis Ababa for more than

three years, they were still unaware of some of the support provided by humanitarian organizations.

For instance, some refugee women were not aware of technical and vocational training at EOC-DICAC and JRS (Iman) and hygiene material support at JRS (Afina, Fatim, Halima, Emani, and Abia). Other refugee women were not aware of food rations and bedding at JRS (Afina), English language and computer training at JRS (Afina and Emani), small business management and entrepreneurial skills at JRS (Afina, Fatim, Halima, Abia), educational allowance at EOC-DICAC (Emani and Afina), and recreational services (sports and music), library, and internet services at JRS (Iman, Emani, Afina, and Abia). While some participants were aware of the support services offered by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, they lacked information about how to access them. Halima described:

In this country, I don't have the information to access the available support. If you go to humanitarian organizations, you can't find the person who gives you the information. The process may be easy, but we don't know how to reach it or how to get something we need. Even when I open their website, I can't get the information. This is a big problem.

Some refugee women were still unaware of their rights and privileges. As a result, they were unable to access the support. For instance, Iman was unaware that the EOC-DICAC would pay for her child's dental implant. Iman thought EOC-DICAC would not pay for medical costs like a dental implant:

When robbers tried to steal my son's phone, they hit his tooth, and one of his front teeth was broken. He has not yet received treatment. It's hard to ask EOC-DICAC for a tooth implant. I haven't taken my son to the hospital yet because I was unaware that EOC-

DICAC would pay for tooth implants. If I had this information, I would not have delayed so long.

### **5.1.2.3. High transportation cost**

Most of the refugee women lived on the outskirts of Addis Ababa as a result of the high rental increase in the inner city. In contrast, refugee-serving humanitarian organizations were located in the city's center. To go to the city center to seek support from humanitarian organizations, refugee women were required to pay high transportation costs. Some refugee women decided to discontinue receiving some forms of support because they were unable to pay for the cost of transportation. For instance, every month, EOC-DICAC provided milk powder to infants between the ages of 6 months and 2 years. Nevertheless, Afina eventually stopped receiving this support due to the high transportation costs she incurred.

JRS gave refugee women who took computer and language classes a transportation allowance. However, Kalah and Halima claimed that the transportation allowance was insufficient to pay for the cost of their transportation. Refugee women stopped attending language and computer classes when the transport allowance and the actual transport costs they incurred did not match. Kalah said:

I started language and computer training at JRS earlier. But I gave it up because my house is too far from JRS. The money given to us for transportation and the money I spent on transportation did not match. So, I stopped taking the training.

According to some refugee women (Aisha, Leila, Marya, and Kalah), it was difficult for them to pick up hygiene products from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations every month because of the high transportation cost. The amount of money they spent on transport to receive sanitary items and the money needed to purchase them on their own were almost the same. Kalah

stated, "When I go from Kaliti neighborhood to humanitarian organizations to pick up sanitary items, I spend about 60 Birr for transportation. I'd rather buy it in the shop by myself instead of going there." Similarly, Aisha said:

I used to take sanitary pads from humanitarian organizations, but now I stopped because humanitarian organizations are far from my house. It's better to buy from a shop by myself than go to humanitarian organizations to get this support. What I spend on transportation and the support they give me are close in terms of money. The difference is very small. If they gave me three or four months of support once, it would not be a problem. But I'd rather not go for that support every month.

#### **5.1.2.4. Support providers' unfriendly treatment**

Refugee women's access to support from humanitarian organizations depended on how support providers treated them. Refugee women reported that they valued how support providers treated them. Emani stated, "When I go to humanitarian organizations, I always see employees' faces. Even though they don't give me anything, if they show me a good face and say something nice to me, I'll go home happily."

Some refugee women stated that they did not have access to some types of support provided by humanitarian organizations because of the support providers' unfriendly treatment. For example, Leila, Nahir, and Marya were not satisfied with the employees who gave them sanitary items at EOC-DICAC. They reported that some employees were not interested in providing them with hygiene products. According to Leila, because of some support providers' unfriendly treatment, several of her friends stopped visiting humanitarian organizations and receiving sanitary products. Because of this, refugee women were forced to incur unnecessary costs to cover sanitary items by themselves. Iman and Abia, on the other hand, found all

humanitarian organization employees, including the ones who provided sanitary products, helpful and kind, and they praised them.

Refugee women could receive medical services at public health centers and hospitals, with the medical expenses covered by a humanitarian organization. However, when Aisha went to a humanitarian organization to collect the money she had paid to the government hospital for her medical treatment, she faced unfriendly treatment. Thus, she stopped using the humanitarian organization's medical allowance:

When I went to a humanitarian organization with the receipt for my treatment at the government hospital, they did not treat me well. At one time, they told me that the cashier didn't come in, and another time they told me to come back again. When I went there for the third time, they even didn't give me attention, let alone refund me the money. From that time on, I did not go to that humanitarian organization and ask them again because they did not give me a good response earlier. I don't want to go there and beg them.

#### **5.1.2.5. Unmet survival needs**

Although some refugee women were interested in taking language, computer, and vocational training programs at humanitarian organizations, they were unable to do so due to giving priority to unmet survival needs. This led them to place a greater emphasis on meeting their essential needs than on receiving skills training from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. Some refugee women preferred to engage in income-earning activities rather than pursue training support. Aisha indicated:

I haven't taken language, computer, or vocational training because I have to work and feed my children. I think it would be better if I went to work and brought some money for my children instead of wasting my time in training. I would love to take such training, but

I need to work because I am a mother of children. If I don't work, I can't feed my children and cover their educational expenses.

Similarly, Abia stated:

I did not go to JRS and take language and computer training. I have to feed my children.

If I waste my time with such training, my children will have nothing to eat. Of course, the training is good for refugees like me. Nowadays, such training is not free but paid for.

#### **5.1.2.6. Childcare responsibility**

Given the patriarchal structure of Yemeni culture, it was up to the refugee women to raise the children. This in turn made it difficult for refugee women like Afina to attend language, computer, and vocational training classes provided by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. As per the respondents, they had limited informal social networks in Addis Ababa because they came from a different country. The difficulty of refugee women's childcare responsibilities was made worse by the limited informal social networks on which they could rely for child care. One of the humanitarian organizations offered childcare services for refugees. However, Afina reported that the childcare facility was not in a position to provide children with appropriate services:

I have not been able to take vocational training offered by EOC-DICAC and JRS because there is no one to look after my children. One of my children is 4 years old, and the other is 1 year old. For whom do I leave my children to take care of them and take the training? The childcare service at a humanitarian organization is not good. Leaving a newborn child for them is unthinkable.

#### **5.1.2.7. Failure to give timely response**

Participants in the study indicated that failure to give timely responses by support providers was one of the barriers they faced when they received support from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. To get certain support, refugee women were forced to knock on the door of support providers several times. Not receiving timely responses from humanitarian organizations was time-consuming and tiresome for many refugee women that discouraged them from using the support.

Moreover, failing to give timely responses increased refugee women's state of vulnerability. Nahir stated, "I went to one of the humanitarian organizations to receive milk powder for my granddaughter and asked them twice, and they told me to take it another time. Then, I fed up and stopped going to that humanitarian organization to receive the support." In a similar vein, Halima described:

If you want something, you must go to them five or ten times to get assistance. It's so difficult because of the system. When you see them on the outside, they seem to be helping us. But the system is so difficult. You have to write an application letter so many times to get some assistance here. They added another problem to us.

#### **5.1.2.8. Community leaders' unfair recruitment**

As per participants, JRS provided food rations and bedding (emergency assistance) to refugees through community leaders. Each refugee nationality had its own community leaders. Two Yemeni community leaders were selected by JRS for the Yemeni refugee community. Refugee women were told to contact their community leaders by JRS to access food rations and bedding. Respondents also indicated that food rations and bedding were given first to those who were most vulnerable (sick and had a large family size).

It was through community leaders' recruitment that refugees were able to get food rations and bedding from JRS. However, some participants reported that community leaders did not select refugees based on vulnerability but rather based on friendship. Participants also accused community leaders of being judgmental and choosing refugees based on the type of clothes they wore. The community leaders' unfair recruitment inhibited refugee women's access to the available support. For instance, Emani described:

What I have experienced in JRS is that recently, food rations, blankets, and mattresses were being given to Yemeni refugees who have relationships with community leaders but not to me. Community leaders only selected their friends and people they knew. When I asked the community leaders, they told me that I would take the support in the next round. It isn't because someone is wearing beautiful clothes. These community leaders should be reformed. Community leaders should have come and looked at our problems at home and decided who was the most vulnerable refugee. It would be good if the community leaders observed house to house for the needy Yemenis. That is why they are our representatives. They have to show our problems to concerned bodies. For the last five years, none of the community leaders have asked about my problems. Even so, they did not contact me a single day. These representatives should ask us what we are missing or our problems.

#### **5.1.2.9. Biased attitude**

Study participants claimed that there was a biased attitude towards them among support providers. They complained that some employees of humanitarian organizations did not treat them equally with other refugee groups, particularly compared to Eritrean refugees. According to participants, this biased attitude stemmed from the misconception that the Yemeni Embassy

assisted Yemeni refugee women. In Addis Ababa, there were a few wealthy people who were descended from Yemenis. These rich Yemenis used to give alms to Yemeni refugees through the Yemen Embassy during Ramadan. In connection with this, some staff members of the humanitarian organizations thought that Yemeni refugees received adequate support from the Yemen Embassy in Addis Ababa. One of the respondents, Nahir, indicated:

Through the Yemeni Embassy, wealthy Yemenis helped us during Ramadan. We were informally informed by humanitarian organizations that we are assisted from the Yemeni embassy. We are also perceived by other refugee communities as receiving consistent support from the embassy. This thought narrowed our access to the available support.

Moreover, according to respondents, they were not treated equally with other refugee communities since Yemeni refugee women received financial support from UNHCR. In Addis Ababa, some refugees were beneficiaries of OCP. OCP refugees were not financially supported by UNHCR as they were supposed to be self-reliant. According to respondents, some employees working at humanitarian organizations only provided assistance to them after OCP beneficiaries, in particular Eritrean refugees, received assistance first. In this regard, Kalah described:

Whenever there is support, employees working at JRS and EOC-DICAC do not give us first. They give to us after other refugee populations especially Eritreans received because they thought that we are financially supported by UNHCR. But this is not fair.

### **5.1.3. Expectation Vs Reality**

Refugee women shared their thoughts about their expectations of the support they would receive from formal support sources in Addis Ababa. Refugee women's expectations about the support they would receive from formal support sources in Addis Ababa were a determinant factor for their wellbeing. In this regard, I found three groups of refugee women.

The first group was those refugee women who expected to receive enough support from the government and non-governmental organizations when they came to Addis Ababa. For instance, respondents like Kalah, Aisha, Cally, and Afina expected that the financial support from UNHCR would be enough to manage their lives. They expected the money would be enough for rent and monthly food budget coverage. However, in actual reality, the money given to them by UNHCR was so small. Cally described, “I didn't think the monthly financial support would be so small. I thought that the monthly financial support would help us to manage our lives, but when we saw it, it was less than we thought.”

Additionally, Iman, Marya, Abia, Kalah, and Afina expected to get good medical support when they came to Addis Ababa. However, refugee women did not find what they expected in reality. Moreover, Emani expected that she would get shelter and food when she came to Addis Ababa. She expected all these things because refugees in Yemen were provided with shelter and food by humanitarian organizations in her homeland:

Refugees in Yemen were provided various forms of support. When I came to this country, I expected that we would enter a house prepared for refugees, and they would accommodate our food. But when I come here and look, there is nothing like that. I came here thinking of all these things. But I never got what I expected.

Not getting the support they expected negatively affected some refugee women's psychological well-being. Some refugee women felt disappointment and sadness and were frustrated when they found what they did not expect. For example, Emani stated, “I feel so bad and become nervous. I said it would be good if I did not move here.” Despite not getting what they expected, refugee women continued receiving support from humanitarian organizations.

The second group of refugee women was those who had lower expectations about the formal support sources. Halima, Leila, and Fatim belonged to this group. These refugee women had lower expectations because their family members who came to Addis Ababa before informed them about the inadequacy and limited availability of support.

The third group of participants were those who did not come to Addis Ababa expecting any support from formal support sources. Nahir and Badia did not imagine support when they came to Ethiopia; rather, they were looking for only peace. Nahir stated, “I came here just to get peace and to save my life from the war. I didn’t hear anything about the support. I just wanted to go out and be safe.” However, as Nahir became familiar with refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, she developed high expectations that these organizations would change her life. Just because of this expectation, she knocked on their doors several times for support. However, she did not get what she expected from them. She focused on herself, as the anticipated support would not come:

I distanced myself from things that were draining my energy and time and started working on my own. I had hope in humanitarian organizations that they would help me in many dimensions. But I found in the actual reality that it was below my expectations. When I realized that it was not going to happen, I gave up my hope in them. I started to look at myself.

#### **5.1.4. Overall Perspectives of Refugee Women about the Type of Support They Received from Formal Support Sources**

Despite receiving various types of support from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, all participants reported that the support they received was not enough and was infrequent. Refugee women like Aisha, Leila Halima, and Nahir reported that humanitarian

organizations were simply using their names for their own benefits. Humanitarian organizations received huge amounts of money in the name of refugees, but refugees received little support. They reported that only employees working in humanitarian organizations benefited, but not them.

Refugee women thought that refugees living in Western countries received adequate support and lived a better life compared to them. However, they only carried the name of a refugee. For instance, Marya reported, “Why does not UNHCR help us just like refugees found in other countries? Refugees in Ethiopia are not equally supported as refugees in America or Europe.”

Additionally, participants in the study reported that humanitarian organizations working with refugees did not discharge their responsibilities effectively. For instance, Halima reported:

It was UNHCR’s responsibility to facilitate the provision of work for refugees. However, neither I had a job nor was I resettled in resettlement countries, which made me frustrated. When humanitarian organizations were observed outside, it seemed that they were helping refugees. But the reality was the opposite. Humanitarian organizations were not living their motto.

Despite their claims that the support was not enough and was not frequent, some refugee women reported that the available support received from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations helped their lives in various ways. Refugee women saw the support they received as a source of assistance. Emani, Cally, and Abia indicated that it was because of the various support that they received from humanitarian organizations that they were alive today. For example, Cally revealed that she and her son would live the worst life if she did not receive various support from humanitarian organizations:

It would be a very ugly life and so much trouble without the support we received from humanitarian organizations. We would have had a worse life if these supports had not been given to us. Support came from humanitarian organizations helped me and my son raise our heads a little bit.

Similarly, Emani reported that if she had not received the available support from humanitarian organizations, life would have been much more difficult for her than it was at the time of the interview. Furthermore, Abia was also grateful for the various support she received from humanitarian organizations serving refugees. She said that whenever she needed support, she got it from humanitarian organizations because they knew who was a hard worker:

I asked humanitarian organizations to give me money for repairing my oven, and they gave me the money. Humanitarian organizations recognize refugees who are working or unemployed. They support refugees who are working hard. They never refused to support me. They are so much more cooperative.

## **5.2. Informal Support Sources**

In the host countries, informal social support sources are essential to promoting the well-being of refugee women. The study's participants reported receiving some form of social support from family, friends, and independent sponsors.

### **5.2.1. Types of Support**

Refugee women received instrumental support, emotional support, and informational support from informal support sources

#### **5.2.1.1. Instrumental support**

Some of the study participants disclosed that they obtained instrumental support, including material and financial support, from family, friends, and independent sponsors. Family

was one of the main sources of instrumental support for refugee women. Refugee women mentioned parents, siblings, and children when they referred family. Some refugee women who had children received financial assistance from their children to help them deal with a shortage of income. For example, Cally's child was employed in one of the Yemeni restaurants in Addis Ababa. With her son's financial assistance, she attempted to deal with the financial challenges. She said, "My son is a waiter in one of the Yemeni restaurants. He helps me financially." However, due to a lack of a work permit and language barriers, Cally's son was unable to get employment in Ethiopian restaurants. In a similar vein, Nahir reported that she was primarily leading her life thanks to her daughter's financial assistance. With her daughter's financial support, she was able to manage her financial problems:

My daughter used to work for a gas company in Yemen before the civil war. This company still pays some percentage of her salary, although she is in Addis Ababa. We are living on this money. So I'm dealing with my economic problems with my daughter's salary.

Moreover, Kalah sometimes asked her children for help when she encountered serious financial problems. She said that when her children had money, they gave it to her:

My two children give me little money. They don't just look at me when I'm starving. Of course, life is also hard for them. Because they have children, they need to cover their children's expenses. They also live in a rental house, so they need to pay for it. They don't support me as much as I need, but they do help me a little bit. They support me somewhat, though not enough.

Family members who lived in developed countries occasionally provided financial help to refugee women. Remittance from a sibling was a financial source for Halima. Halima got

financial assistance from her brother who lived in Norway. She would face extreme economic hardship in Addis Ababa if her brother did not support her:

After my brother went to Norway, he helped me by sending money. After he went to Norway, I was relatively good financially. Since he knows the life here, he is still supporting me. He had already faced many challenges here, so he knew everything. He understands my problems. If he had not gone to Norway, I would live a worse life than the one I am living now.

Refugee women who had little children faced challenges while trying to engage in income-earning activities as no one would take care of their children. During this time, for refugee women like Afina, remittance from family members living abroad was the main financial source of support. Afina described:

My husband's father lives in Saudi Arabia and sends us money every month. We mainly live with this money. The money given by UNHCR is not enough for rent and food. If my husband's family did not support us, we would suffer a lot in this country. However, the money we got from abroad helped our life a lot.

Another source of instrumental support for refugee women was friends from an ethnic-like refugee community. Since most of their fellow refugees suffered economic hardships, refugee women usually did not get material or financial support from them. However, their friends helped refugee women during difficult times, such as health problems and losing loved ones. For example, Marya reported that she received financial support from her friends when she lost her sister. Among the respondents, only Emani received financial and material support from her Ethiopian national friend. Emani described:

I went to Merkato, and my bag and my phone were stolen by robbers. Then I met a stranger. He paid us two months' rent and bought us mattresses, blankets, and even a charcoal burner. This is the man who has stood by and encouraged me and my child until this day. He supported me financially.

Emani overcame some challenges that required money, thanks to her friend's material and financial support. She experienced a sense of belonging to the local community as a result of the support. However, support from her friend created a feeling of pressure to repay the support she received. She worried about when she would give back the assistance she had been given. She described:

I have an Ethiopian friend who supports me, and sometimes I don't feel good when he offers me money because I feel like the money he has given me thus far is a lot. When he always supports me, I feel awful. Why do I disturb the same individual every time? So far, this person has given me huge assistance. Why then do I ask him for more assistance? Sometimes, I ask God to give me something so that I can please him. I frequently say when is the day that I work and delight my friend who always helps me? My mind is racing with the idea of when I'll be able to pay this man back for his support. When should I buy a gift for his child and take it home? When should I buy something to make him happy? I can't achieve this now because I don't have a job.

The other source of instrumental support for refugee women was independent sponsors (wealthy Yemenis). Respondents frequently stated that they received financial and material support from wealthy Yemenis who worked and resided in Addis Ababa. These wealthy Yemenis were not refugees. As per the respondents, most wealthy Yemenis married Ethiopian

women and worked with the business licenses of their spouses. The wealthy Yemenis were born and raised either in Yemen or Ethiopia.

Most of the time, refugee women receive financial and material support from independent sponsors during the holiday. There is a notion called zakat that occurs during Ramadan. Each Muslim who fulfills the requirements for zakat has a religious duty to donate a certain amount of their wealth each year to the needy and the impoverished. Refugee women looked to wealthy Yemenis during Ramadan for support. Then, wealthy Yemenis provided them with material and monetary support (Zakat). Support came in the form of cash, sheep, flour, rice, oil, sugar, and other items.

All of the participants expressed gratitude for the support they had received from wealthy Yemenis during the holiday. Marya said, "In our country, we celebrated Ramadan by buying many things. But in this country, we are not able to do this. So, we can only celebrate the holiday with the support of these rich people." In a similar vein, Cally stated, "May Allah give them all the things they need. We also live with the help of these rich people. During Ramadan, they give us money, grain, or oil." Furthermore, Afina described:

Wealthy Yemenis have given me a gift of sheep during Ramadan. The community leaders wrote on our WhatsApp group that there is a rich man who would give a sheep for Eid. Then, we phoned the rich person, registered our names, and were able to take the sheep. During Ramadan, another rich man gave me 1.000 Birr. When such support was available, the community leaders notify us via WhatsApp. The community leaders give us the phone numbers of the investors. We call the given phone number and receive our support.

According to respondents, they used to receive wealthy Yemenis' support through the Yemeni embassy in Addis Ababa. Independent sponsors provided assistance items to the embassy, which then distributed it to the refugees. However, following COVID-19, wealthy Yemenis stopped providing refugees through the Yemeni embassy in favor of Yemeni community representatives.

Refugee women also received financial support from independent sponsors when they faced severe medical problems. Wealthy Yemenis helped refugee women obtain appropriate medical treatment. Badia illustrated:

The good thing here is that we have Yemeni businessmen. When we face big challenges, we go to them for support. The businessmen here in Ethiopia help Yemenis, who are suffering a lot. For example, a female refugee needed heart surgery. The doctor at Zewditu Hospital said that she needed immediate surgery and informed her that she should get heart surgery in one of the private hospitals. She was moved to Korea Hospital, which is a private hospital, and the hospital asked her to pay about 200,000 Birr for the treatment. One of humanitarian organizations said to wait for us for two days; otherwise, they couldn't do anything else. If this woman delayed for one day, she would die. So we went to the Yemeni rich people. These rich people helped her in terms of finances, and the woman got the necessary medical treatment at the private hospital.

Additionally, according to respondents, wealthy Yemenis supported them at times. For instance, Abia described that a wealthy Yemeni rented five of them a space in a bazaar during Ramadan. She then sold cosmetics in a bazaar. She also mentioned that Yemeni wealthy individuals paid her children's private school tuition for some years.

Refugee women were generally appreciative of the material and financial support they got from family, friends, and independent sponsors. Their financial pressure was lessened, and their financial situation was somewhat stabilized by the support. However, they complain that it was insufficient and inconsistent.

#### **5.2.1.2.. Emotional support**

Some respondents described that they received emotional support from family and friends. The family was one of the sources from which refugee women occasionally found emotional support. Fatim, Leila, Marya, Cally, Kalah, and Halima were among the respondents who received emotional support from their family members. Family members who live in Addis Ababa, including parents, grandparents, siblings, and children, provided them with emotional support. In addition, family members who remained in Yemen provided emotional support to refugee women. The emotional support included encouragement, sympathy, listening, caring, and sharing feelings.

It was crucial for refugee women, who faced many adversaries in Addis Ababa, to receive emotional support from their closest family members. Refugee women overcame challenges related to adaptation with the emotional support of their family members. For instance, Fatim's family provided her with emotional support when she was having difficulty adapting. She overcame numerous challenges in her adaptation with the emotional support of her family. The family was still her primary source of emotional support. She described, "I get emotional support from my family. My family is my main source of emotional support. When I feel tired or in pain, my family members say, it's okay, one day everything will be alright."

Friends were also another source of emotional support for some refugee women at times. Friends comforted, cared for, and encouraged refugee women during their difficult times.

Respondents stated that while friends from Ethiopian nationals and other refugee communities provided them with emotional support, friends from their community provided it most of the time. Their friends' emotional support improved their well-being. For example, Iman considered the emotional support she received from her friends to be valuable and incomparable to any financial assistance. She stated, "It's not just because someone gives you money; it's because they encourage you. Emotional support is a great support above all else." Marya went through a tough period when her sister became ill and finally died. She appreciated her friends' moral support at the time. She described:

When my sister was sick, my friends gave me strength by giving me emotional support.

When my sister died, it was my friends who consoled me. I am very happy with the emotional support my friends have given me because they were with me when I was sad.

They used to tell me that this thing would pass, don't worry. This is a big support for me.

Similarly, Fatm reported that she received care and comfort from her friends. She shared, "Most of my friends are refugees like me. I'm not expecting cash assistance from them. They give me moral support, and I'm satisfied with the support they give me because it helps me ease my stress." Furthermore, Emani acknowledged the value of the emotional support her friends gave her when she was having trouble adjusting. She thought that there was someone closer to her, thanks to the emotional support:

It's good to have someone around. If you have someone around you, you will talk to that person and discuss different issues. My Yemeni friends here told me not to worry, and that we will go to Yemen when the civil war is settled. My friends also told me that tomorrow is another day. I have been leading my life so far with the moral support of sincere friends. I am very happy. It gives me the sense that there is someone nearer to me.

Support is not just money and material. Money can be lost. If someone encourages you and gives you emotional support that is also good support.

Spending time with friends gave Leila joy, as she got emotional support from them. She indicated. "When I'm with my friends, I forget about my life for a while. Spending time with them gives me joy or a mental health break. They encourage and support me morally." Moreover, Halima told her friends about the challenges she faced, and they acknowledged that they shared her challenges. She understood from this that she was not the only one dealing with challenges with adaptation. She described:

It is important because I see someone like me. I see someone who has the same kind of challenges as me. I feel that I'm not alone. The emotional support and talking about the challenges we faced helped me. When I faced challenges, I spoke to my friends, and they told me that they had also faced the challenges I faced. So it is very important.

### **5.2.1.3. Informational support**

For some refugee women, the main sources of informational support were friends and family. Family and friends provided informational support to refugee women regarding a range of issues. Learning about the support services offered by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations was one of them. In the early phases of their arrival, friends from the ethnically similar refugee population were crucial in providing information to refugee women about where to go and how to receive social support from humanitarian organizations.

For instance, Kalah stated, "The information I get from my friends is helpful. Based on the information I got from my friends, I went to humanitarian organizations to get some support. The information I get from my friends helped me." In a similar vein, at the beginning, Emani was unaware of the support that was offered by humanitarian organizations. After some time

spent in Addis Ababa, her friend told her about some support available from humanitarian organizations:

A friend who came from Yemen told me the information. We had a group of friends when we came from Yemen, and then after a while, we all split up. At some point, this friend called and told me about the existence of some support from JRS. Then I went to JRS and received the hygiene materials and job training.

In addition, some refugee women received information about available support at humanitarian organizations from family members who came to Addis Ababa earlier. For example, Halima's brother, who traveled to Addis Ababa before she did, gave her information on some types of support offered by humanitarian organizations:

My brother was in Ethiopia before he left this country for Norway. So I didn't face challenges in knowing the organizations working with refugees. He already informed me about the support that humanitarian organizations were providing. I had information about their support.

Furthermore, before Fatim arrived in this country, her mother and sister had already arrived. They provided her with all the information regarding the support that was available at humanitarian organizations:

When I arrived in Addis, my mom and sister were already there. I came after them. Then they welcomed me. My sister had information. So I got all the necessary information about the available social support at humanitarian organizations from my sister.

Learning about jobs that were accessible was the other issue. Some refugee women got information about formal sector jobs from friends of a similar ethnic background. For example, when Cally first arrived, she was unable to find employment in the formal sector. She was

unaware of where to look for work. As Cally continued to live in the city, she made friends who provided her with information on jobs in the formal economy. She left her job later because she was not paid the same as Ethiopian nationals for the same work that she did.

### **5.3. Meanings Attached to Being Supported**

Participants shared their viewpoints regarding the meanings attached to being supported by formal and informal support sources. Except for Nahir, the rest of the participants reported that it gave them the thinking that there was someone nearer to them when they were being supported by both formal and informal social support sources. Fatim said, “From whoever support sources come, support keeps you stand up and make you strong. It is indicators of you are not living alone.”

However, respondents stated that they felt happier when they worked and earned money rather than when they sought support from social support sources. They also described that they did not look for support if they would have open access to formal sector job opportunities. Kalah revealed, “There is no such thing as having your own job. I would like to work and earn money if the conditions are favorable. There is nothing like working your own job in a peaceful country and earn money.” In a similar vein, Cally described:

Now my knee is ill. But I don't want to sit down and wait anyone's hand for support. I want to work and support myself despite I'm feeling knee pain. I will be very happy when I work and earn money. That gives me more pleasure.

Only Nahir reported that she did not feel comfort when she received support from sources especially from formal support sources given her experience of being economically capable and providing support to the needy while she was in her homeland. However, the limited income forced her to seek supports from social support sources:

I feel bad when I'm being supported by others, especially by humanitarian organizations because I knew what kind of life I used to live. When I was in Yemen, I used to help people. But in this country, I myself require support. This disturbs my feelings. This strikes my mind. But I have no choice than receiving support from humanitarian organization as I'm economically weak.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Findings on the Coping Strategies of Refugee Women**

The prior chapter indicated that social support helped refugee women cope with adaptation challenges in Addis Ababa. However, refugee women faced difficulty accessing support sources that could provide them with the needed support. The support they received was not sufficient to help them deal with the adaptation challenges. During this time, refugee women employed other coping strategies to deal with adaptation challenges.

This chapter describes the coping strategies of refugee women to manage adaptation challenges in the face of social support deficits. This section presented the coping strategies of refugee women into four categories, such as coping with economic challenges, coping with identity-related challenges, coping with linguistic and socio-cultural challenges, and additional coping strategies. Each category has specific coping strategies that refugee women employ to deal with various adversities.

#### **6.1. Coping with Economic Challenges**

Refugee women facing economic-related challenges in Addis Ababa used various survival strategies, including engaging in income-generating activities, selling possessions, marrying local men, and prioritizing spending. Specifically, to cope with housing problems, refugee women used some coping strategies, such as renting houses in Addis Ababa's outskirts, living in a small rental house, and sharing a room with family members.

##### **6.1.1. Engaging in Income-generating Activities**

Some of the women were engaged in various income-generating activities, which increased their financial strength, and in turn helped them cope with some of their challenges. Having more financial resources served as a stress buffer. Some women engaged in a single

income-earning activity, while others were engaged in two or more income-generating activities at different times. When a certain income-generating activity became ineffective, they changed to another type of income-generating activity. Some income-generating activities required refugee women to have training or skills. However, others did not.

The income-generating activities that refugee women were engaged in included street vending, teaching Arabic at private schools, preparing and selling food items and frankincense, commission jobs, working as a cashier or caretaker, and sewing clothes at home.

**Street vending.** Some refugee women worked in street vending. Refugee women sold vegetables, incense, bras, socks, and underwear on the street. To initiate their street vending efforts, they raised money from friends and family members. According to respondents, starting a street-selling business was inexpensive. Since there were limited employment opportunities in the formal sector, street vending was an alternative way to enhance refugee women's finances and support their daily financial needs.

After doing this job for a short period, both Iman and Abia were forced to stop due to the local authority's strict control. Respondents reported that street vending is an illegal business activity in Addis Ababa. As per respondents, the local authorities chased them away on a regular basis. Iman used to sell vegetables on the street and earn money that supported her family. However, she could not continue doing this job because the local authorities forcefully evicted her and confiscated her items several times. As she stated:

I went to the street to sell potatoes, tomatoes, and onions, and then the law enforcers asked me why I was seating there and selling vegetables. They threw away my vegetables. Many times, the law enforcers chased me away. When I faced this incident repeatedly, I stopped working.

Abia used to sell vegetables on the street. Since vegetables were easily perishable, she changed the type of item she sold. She stopped selling vegetables and started selling undergarments and frankincense. Abia worked this job for some time but eventually quit due to the strict control of the local authorities. She shared, "in addition to selling vegetables, I also started selling bras, socks, underwear, and frankincense on the street. But the police didn't let me work. So I gave it up."

To escape the local authorities' arrest and confiscation of items, street vendors run away quickly. Respondents reported that they risked their lives and used to work this job as there were limited job opportunities in the formal sector. Respondents indicated that a few of their friends (street vendors) faced car accidents while they ran away from local authorities. After stopping street vending, Abia engaged in other income-generating activities, like being hired in supermarkets as a cashier. In contrast to Abia, Iman did not return to any income-generating activity during the time of data collection.

**Teaching at private schools.** A few of the refugee women who were educated teach Arabic at private schools. Leila and Marya indicated that their source of income and livelihood came from teaching. In some private schools, students could learn a language of their interest in addition to required subjects. Refugee women reported that they taught Arabic to students who were interested in knowing this language. In addition to teaching in private schools, refugee women were called by some families to tutor their children at home.

Even though refugee women earned money by teaching at a private school, the wages were not sufficient. They described their pay as "better than nothing." Participants stated that their earnings could only cover petty items. For instance, Marya indicated, "I teach Arabic in a private school now. But my monthly salary is small. I earn only 2000 Birr per month. What do I

do with this money? I use it just to buy hair cream, lotion, and perfume." Similarly, Leila stated, "I used to teach Arabic even though the monthly payment wasn't that good. However, I felt like I had a purpose when I was a teacher." Although the salary was low, refugee women regarded teaching at private schools as a good opportunity that gave them a sense of purpose.

While Marya continued teaching Arabic at a private school, Leila stopped teaching and was unemployed at the time of data collection. After teaching at a private school for four solid years, Leila left her teaching job due to COVID-19. The school let go of a number of employees due to the pandemic. Leila was one of them. Since that time, she has not been able to return to teaching.

I have been teaching at a private school for about 4 years. I taught students who wanted to learn Arabic for two days a week. However, due to the Coronavirus, the course was interrupted. After the school resumed its work, it reduced some of its staff. I was one of them. I stopped teaching there for this reason. The school did not call me back after that.

**Preparing and selling food items and frankincense.** Some participants, including Nahir and Abia, prepared food and frankincense at home and sold it to their customers. The food items they sold included cookies, cakes, and '*Asanbusa*' (bread made with flour and rice or lentils wrapped inside). Study participants were able to capitalize on their experience in cooking and baking. For instance, Nahir received orders from her customers, especially during holidays and birthdays. She said, "I prepare cookies, cakes, and '*Asanbusa*' and sell them to people who book me for birthdays and Ramadan." Besides selling some food items, Nahir prepared and sold frankincense called "Behor" (a fine incense that is smoked when the coffee is made) to her customers.

Abia also prepared food when people called her into their house. When there is a celebration, Abia contracts with customers to prepare and deliver a meal. Refugee women reported that preparing and selling food items and frankincense helped them financially. Nahir shared, "I am supporting myself and my family through these works. I think I've been successful on my own. I plan to improve these works in the future."

Refugee women typically sold items to their ethnic community members. Participants knew Yemenis who would buy their products. When refugee women had something to sell, they went to the rich community members. Respondents stated that there were wealthy Yemenis who were not refugees and who worked and resided in Addis Ababa. Refugee women knew rich Yemenis in their area

Refugee women could not sell their products to supermarkets and shops as they did not have the required Tin number. Supermarkets and shops usually require them to have a Tin number. Refugee women could not get a Tin number. They were not allowed to do so by the concerned body because they were refugees. Hence, refugee women used their informal social connections while working this kind of job. Nahir stated, "I don't sell to the supermarket since they ask me for the Tin number. I can't get the Tin since I'm not allowed to have it. Instead, I tried to sell to my acquaintances, which increased my income."

**Commission jobs.** A few refugee women were engaged in commission jobs. However, the money they earned from commissions was irregular. For instance, Aisha was working on a commission basis in the Merkato here in Addis Ababa (the largest marketplace in Africa). When she did this job, she identified herself with a certain ethnic group to build trusted relationships with the individuals she was working with. She lied about her identity to gain acceptance at her job. In the Merkato neighborhood, there were areas dominated by a certain ethnic group. Aisha

identified herself with the Silte ethnic group. She told the people working there that she had Silte ethnic origins. The people who were working there accepted Aisha and let her work with them:

I received a commission from the shop owners. They paid me based on the number of customers I brought to their shops and purchased their products. To do work like selling different items and getting commissions from shop owners in Merkato, I hide my identity and say I am Silte because the area where I work is mostly ethnic Siltes. My phone's ringing tone is Silte music. I told them that I have Silte origins. I told them that although I grew up in Yemen, I have Silte ancestry on my mother's side. I also told them that I did not know the language because I grew up in Yemen. They accepted me and allowed me to work with them. Acting like the local community is my responsibility.

**Working as a cashier or caretaker.** Abia was working as a cashier in a supermarket at the time of the interview. She got this job via her informal social networks, particularly friends. Even though Abia was able to earn money from this job, her contract was only temporary. She was given a brief contract with a supermarket and was informed that she would be leaving soon. To subsidize her earnings, Abia also provided care at home for female patients. Back in Yemen, she had completed health training to become a caretaker. She stated, "I received a little health training when I was in Yemen. Given my experience, I take care of female patients at their homes in Addis Ababa." The wages Abia got by doing these jobs helped her support herself and her family. She said, "By doing such jobs, I was able to feed my children. I was able to cover the house rent. I was able to cover my children's clothes and shoes to some extent." She was relieved that the jobs she worked do not require an Ethiopian identity card.

**Sewing clothes at home.** A few refugee women sew clothes at home and sell them to their customers. Badia had a sewing machine and took orders from her customers, sewed the clothes at home, and sold it to them. She was able to support her family and herself by making clothes. Most of her customers were members of ethnic-like communities. Badia's landlord was not happy while she was sewing clothes at home. The landlord was always concerned with the noise. She stated, "I have a small machine at home. I sew clothes and try to support myself financially. The owner of the house constantly nags me about the noise."

### **6.1.2. Selling Possessions**

Refugee women faced serious economic challenges. To cope with their financial challenges, some refugee women who had valued decorative items (rings, necklaces, bracelets, and earrings) were forced to sell them. For instance, Kalah had jewelry when she came to Addis Ababa. When she was financially weak, she sold her decorative items to meet her financial needs. She said, "One of my sources of income was to sell the gold rings and necklace I brought with me from Yemen. I tried to cope with financial problems by selling my jewelry."

Selling decorative items temporarily eased the financial difficulties of refugee women's lives. However, study participants regretted losing their decorative items. For example, Kalah felt so bad when she sold her decorative items because she lost her adornment.

Refugee women were also forced to sell valued possessions like land, houses, and furniture back in Yemen. Refugee women told their left-behind families or friends to sell their valued possessions and send back the money to them. Selling valued possessions gave temporary financial relief to refugee women. For example, Cally had furniture in Yemen. When she faced serious financial difficulties in Addis Ababa, she told her friends to sell her possessions and send the money to her:

I was having severe financial difficulties. Selling the furniture I have in Yemen was the only thing I can do. In Yemen, I had furniture. I told my friends to sell it. They sent me the money after selling the furniture. I felt temporary financial relief from that money.

### **6.1.3. Marrying Local Men**

Halima and Leila spoke about how individuals they knew dealt with financial hardships. They said that to get out of economic difficulty, some of their friends who shared a similar ethnic background married Ethiopian men. A few of their friends found that getting married to local men made their financial challenges vanish. However, for other friends, it put another challenge on hold. According to the respondents, some of their friends thought marrying Ethiopian men would improve their quality of life. Instead of getting what they had expected from their spouse, their friends' suffering continued. As Halima described:

I saw many Yemeni refugees who got married to Ethiopian men to escape economic difficulties. One of my friends got married to an Ethiopian guy. First, she thought that she would live a better life by marrying him. However, she was deceived by him. Before marriage, the man said a lot of things to her. He told her that he had a car, a house, and everything. When she started living together with him, she found that her spouse had nothing. Her husband didn't support her. She suffered a lot. Now she lives alone.

Alhamdulillah! She did not give birth. But I'm sorry for her life.

By looking at some of their friends' unsuccessful stories, single refugee women like Halima and Leila were discouraged from getting married to Ethiopian men. Both of them described that they rejected marriage proposals from Ethiopian men. Concerning this, Halima stated:

Many Yemeni refugees who got married to Ethiopian men did not live a good life. The refugees that I know are complaining and suffering. I know some friends who got married to Ethiopian men, and now they are divorced. Because of this reason, I decided not to marry an Ethiopian guy.

#### **6.1.4. Prioritizing spending**

Some refugee women reported that they were careful with spending money and prioritized their needs. They did not spend their money on what they considered “unnecessary things.” Prioritizing spending money helped refugee women save money for meeting their basic needs and emergency cases. For example, Halima did not go outside of her house and meet her friends unless it was for strong reasons. Meeting her friends and having tea or coffee with them was, in Halima's view, an unnecessary activity that put her at risk of facing more financial difficulties:

I don't go out of my home to have tea or coffee with my friends. If I go outside, I am required to pay money for transportation and social gatherings. I don't want to spend my money on unimportant things like this. I spend the money I have on the most important things, like house rent, food, and emergency cases. I only go out of my home and meet my friends for the most important things, not to have tea or coffee with them, or even entertainment, and the like. But I feel isolated from my friends.

Halima would continue using this strategy until she got a good job and became financially strong. She stated, "When I have a job and adequate money, I will go out of my home and have fun with my friends." Similarly, Leila allocated the money she had for the things she considered necessary:

I am trying to use the money I have to fulfill my basic needs, like food and shelter. I don't go to cafes, restaurants, or other places of entertainment to take time with friends. I am distancing myself from things that cost me money until good times come.

#### **6.1.5. Renting Houses in Addis Ababa's Outskirts**

Participants in the study were unable to afford rental housing in Addis Ababa. Refugee women stated that they received little financial assistance from formal support sources. The financial support they got from informal social networks like family, friends, and independent sponsors was also inadequate and not frequent. Consequently, refugee women rented houses on the outskirts of Addis Ababa to reduce the cost of the rent. All of the refugee women, except Aisha, moved to the city's outskirts, where rent is somewhat less expensive than the downtown, and rented a house that was suitable for them. For example, Kalah rented a house on the outskirts of the city to cope with the high cost of house rent in Addis Ababa:

I rent a house in the Akaki neighborhood. If I rent around Kera, Gotera, or Mebrat Hail, I'm going to be asked to pay a lot of money. I couldn't afford this. But in the Akaki neighborhood, the rent was relatively low, so I went to this neighborhood and rented a house.

By employing this coping strategy, refugee women paid less for housing. In turn, this helped them retain some kind of mental and financial stability. However, for some refugee women, renting houses on the outskirts of Addis Ababa brought a high cost of transportation. Renting houses on the outskirts of the city and the expense of transportation were trade-offs. It might be advantageous for refugee women to find affordable housing. However, transportation costs rose. Refugee women had to pay a high amount of money to receive support from

humanitarian organizations working with refugees. For instance, Kalah said "it costs me a lot of money when I travel from where I reside to EOC-DICAC or JRS to receive support."

Refugee women also mentioned that several of their friends had moved to Addis Ababa's nearby towns like Gelan, Sululta, Burayu, and Bishoftu to rent houses. In contrast to Addis Ababa, where renting a home was more expensive, the neighboring towns offered more reasonable alternatives for housing.

#### **6.1.6. Living in a Small Rental House**

Refugee women rented small houses because they could not afford larger ones. Due to residing in a small rental home, refugee women's financial burden eased to some extent. Despite the financial advantages, living in a small rental home presented certain difficulties for refugee women. One of the challenges was the lack of open space for praying. For refugee women who valued their religious beliefs, this was a major challenge. The refugee women wanted an open area where they could pray and engage in other religious rituals.

For instance, Abia used to live in a big house. As she was unable to pay the house rent for a big house, she was forced to rent a small house. Even though renting a small house gave her financial relief to some extent, it also presented challenges like the lack of open space for a praying. The second challenge was the limited space for study, which impacted her children's education. Abia also described how living in a small house affected her children's education negatively because they did not have open space for studying:

I used to live in a big house. After a while, I couldn't pay the rent for this house. So I rented a small house and started living there. Renting this house has helped me financially to some extent. But, since it is a very narrow house, I lost a place for Salah. My children sleep in a small, open area, so I am unable to pray on the ground at night or

in the morning when they are asleep. Living in a small room has also hurt my children's education. My children could not get a reading area.

The third challenge was the lack of privacy for young adult refugees. Young adult refugees wanted to establish their independence. Given her financial weakness, Kalah lived with two of her young adult children in what they called a "studio" (a resident home that consists only of a living room and restroom without having a bedroom). For Kalah, living in a studio together invaded the privacy of her young adult children. She said that "A studio is very cramped. My children are young adults. So it's hard to live with young adults in a crowded manner in this house, as they need privacy."

#### **6.1.7. Sharing a Room with Family Members**

Refugee women like Fatim, Marya, Halima, and Leila rented houses together with family members as a strategy to reduce the high cost of house rent. They were able to share the cost of housing rent with family members because they shared rooms and lived together. Sharing a room with family members, despite its contributions, posed some challenges for refugee women. Especially for young adult refugee women like Halima and Leila, shared spaces did not give them comfort. It invaded their private lives. For example, Halima was living with her grandmother at the time of the interview. She wanted to rent a house alone, as living together with the other person limited her privacy:

I faced a lack of income. As a result, I couldn't rent a house alone. Since the house rent is so expensive in Addis Ababa, I am living with my family. At first, I used to live with my brother. Since my brother left this country, I have been living with my grandmother.

Living with my family members affects my life a lot. When you live with somebody, you can't do what you want at home. You can't wash your dress and you cannot invite your

friends at any time. You can't protect your appearance. Someone sees things that you don't like to be seen by others. In general, it affects my life significantly.

Similarly, Leila lived with her four sisters, two brothers, and a cousin in a condominium house. Sharing a room with family members made Leila happy, as it reduced her financial burden. At the same time, it caused her to lose her privacy. She stated, "Since I live together with my siblings, we share the rent and food. This financially gave me relief, although living with family members invades my freedom to be alone."

## **6.2. Coping with Identity-related Challenges**

Refugee women employed creative coping strategies, such as sending Ethiopian nationals to the shop, taking off the Abaya, and using essential words from the local language to prevent market price distortion, specifically an increase in price targeting their identity. Refugee women were also employed to use the avoidance strategy to cope with unrecognized identity papers.

### **6.2.1. Sending Ethiopian Nationals to the Shop**

Refugee women indicated that they faced an increase in prices in many areas. The increment in price in many areas was related to their identity. Respondents described that sellers sold the same items to Ethiopians at lower prices. To cope with this challenge, refugee women sometimes sent their Ethiopian friends to the shop when they wanted to buy something. For instance, Afina sent her Ethiopian friends to the shop as a strategy to deal with the increase in price for goods that targeted her identity. Afina was able to get the things she required without price increases thanks to this strategy. For Afina and other refugee women, however, using this strategy is not a viable long-term solution:

When I entered the shops to purchase something I needed, the sellers told me an inflated price. Because sellers charge different prices for the same things for Ethiopians and me.

My strategy for dealing with the price increases is to send my friends who are Ethiopians to the shop. For the time being, using this strategy assisted in alleviating the issue of price increases related to my identity. When I regularly send my Ethiopian friends to the shop, I know they will be exhausted.

### **6.2.2. Taking off the Abaya**

Refugee women reported that when they went to a shop or other marketplace wearing an Abaya (a full-length dress worn by Muslim women), sellers increased the price of goods for them. As per participants, sellers identified refugee women wearing Abayas who came from Arab countries. Refugee women abandoned their Abayas when they went to marketplaces to avoid price increases. For example, Nahir was a victim of price increases when she went shopping wearing her Abaya. To reduce this problem, she took off her Abaya when she went to the shop, which helped her avoid price increase. However, when she took off her Abaya, Nahir encountered conflict with her family members because it was culturally and religiously unacceptable to do so:

Sellers increased their prices by looking at the clothes I wore. I removed the cloth (Abaya) I wore when I went to the shop to avoid an increase in the price of goods. I removed my Abaya and changed clothes that any Muslim Ethiopian woman wore. The sellers didn't charge me extra because I was dressed shitty and had a scarf. However, when I took off the Abaya, my family, especially my brother, quarreled with me.

### **6.2.3. Using Essential Words from the Local Language**

Some refugee women went to the shop and struggled to communicate with sellers using the local language, which is Amharic. When sellers realized that refugee women were not Ethiopian citizens they increased the price of items. Refugee women learned to use limited

Amharic words that are needed for shopping. For example, Halima spoke only a few Amharic words essential for shopping when she went to the shop, which helped her to not be identified by sellers. This strategy reduced the likelihood of a price increase, which worked as a short-term solution:

How do they notice me, I wonder? Many sellers raised the cost of their goods for me when I was unable to speak Amharic in front of them. When they realized I wasn't from Ethiopia, they charged me more money. In an attempt to get around this challenge, I used a few basic shopping-related Amharic phrases.

#### **6.2.4. Using Avoidance Strategy**

To cope with challenges related to their identity, refugee women used avoidance as a strategy. For instance, refugee women tried to avoid going to organizations that required their identity cards unless it was mandatory. Aisha stated, “I don't go to places that require kebele identity cards. For example, I don't go to association shops and buy sugar, flour, and oil because they require me to have a Kebele identity card and coupon.”

### **6.3. Coping with Linguistic and Socio-cultural Challenges**

Refugee women employed specific coping strategies to cope with linguistic and socio-cultural challenges, including participating in social gatherings to deal with language barriers, social isolation, and cultural differences; using language learning and rehearsal strategies to diminish language barriers; and using virtual communication tools to reduce social isolation.

#### **6.3.1. Participating in Social Gatherings**

Refugee women reported that they faced language difficulties, cultural variations, and social isolation in Addis Ababa. To cope with these challenges, refugee women participated in social gatherings. One of the social gatherings in Ethiopia is the coffee ceremony. Refugee

women sometimes joined their neighbors during the coffee ceremony. Ethiopian culture has a tradition known as the coffee ceremony, which encourages social gatherings. During the coffee ceremony, the local community members raised various issues, including the norms and values of the community, using the local language. This helped refugee women improve their Amharic language skills, become familiar with the culture of Ethiopia, and reduce their feelings of isolation. Fatim and Aisha were among the respondents who used this coping strategy.

For example, Fatim said, "I tried to join Ethiopians during the coffee ceremony. I speak with them while I have coffee with them. I learned more about the country's culture or anything like that during the coffee ceremony." Aisha also learned essential Amharic words during the coffee ceremony. She learned some essential Amharic words that helped her communicate with the local community in her day-to-day life, like transportation and shopping. Aisha stated, "I learned some Amharic words that are needed for transportation and shopping during coffee ceremonies with neighbors."

### **6.3.2. Using Language Learning and Rehearsal Strategies**

In host countries, refugees may use various language-learning strategies to learn the local language. However, as a language learning strategy, Fatim and Aisha wrote down an Amharic word they heard in Arabic and asked people about its meaning. Participants used their informal social networks, such as their families and friends, to learn the Amharic language. They also rehearsed the word several times so they would not forget it. By using language learning and rehearsal strategies, refugee women gradually increased their vocabulary and learned the Amharic language.

For example, Fatim wrote down an Amharic word she heard in Arabic and asked her friends who knew the language about the meaning of the word, and then she recorded it in her notebook. Later on, she rehearsed the word she heard:

I was trying to learn Amharic. I used a notebook and pen. I wrote the word that I heard in my language (Arabic). I heard this word today and asked what it meant. My friends who speak Amharic told me the meaning. I kept that word in mind. By doing this, I fixed the language problem. Within two years, I was able to speak Amharic.

Participants reported that the local community laughed and made fun of them when they heard their local accent. However, refugee women did not give up learning the language. For example, Aisha said, "People laughed and made fun of me when they heard my Amharic language because I was unable to properly speak the language. I made an effort to learn the language, despite their attempts to bully me while I spoke."

### **6.3.3. Using Virtual Communication Tools**

While they resided in Addis Ababa, refugee women faced social isolation. Refugee women communicated online with social networks even though they were geographically separated from them, thanks to apps that allowed voice and video calls. By employing this coping strategy, refugee women were able to feel more socially connected to the informal social networks that they left behind. For example, Leila met with her friends and relatives in her homeland using WhatsApp and IMO apps. Using these applications reduced her feelings of loneliness and isolation:

We are living apart from our loved ones. It's because we use WhatsApp and IMO that we've reduced our nostalgia (missing them) to some extent. Through these applications, we can find our friends and relatives. We discuss our situation and give emotional

support to each other. If we couldn't find this kind of application, we would be mad because of loneliness.

#### **6.4. Additional Coping Strategies**

Refugee women used additional coping strategies to cope with adaptation challenges like religious belief, cognitive reappraisal, and venting emotions. These coping strategies helped refugee women deal with several adaptation challenges they faced in Addis Ababa.

##### **6.4.1. Religious Belief**

One of the coping strategies that allowed refugee women to cope with adaptation challenges was their belief in God. All refugee women had a strong faith in God. All participants in my study were Muslims. As followers of the Islam religion, refugee women described performing religious rituals like reading the Qur'an, praying five times a day (Salah), and fasting during Ramadan (Sawm). As per the respondents of my study, they employed religious belief for most challenges they encountered after arrival in Addis Ababa, and it was found that religious belief had a positive impact on their well-being.

Refugee women believed that God helped them overcome several challenges they faced while they resided in Addis Ababa. Cally faced so many challenges in Addis Ababa. Despite facing various challenges, she overcame all of them and reached this day with the help of God. She said, "A soul that Allah has not cut will not be cut." Nahir made a very similar statement. She faced multiple challenges with her family problems and personal health conditions. She overcame all these challenges through prayer:

I was in dire circumstances. My daughter was raped, my son suffered from an anxiety disorder, and I got sick with a liver infection. But with the help of Allah, I was able to overcome all this suffering. It was du'a (prayer) that helped me.

Refugee women believed that God had reasons for bringing them to Addis Ababa so that he would never let them down. Refugee women prayed to their God when they faced something difficult. For instance, Iman described, "I pray to Allah, saying that since you are the one who brought me to this country, please give me housing." About this, having faith in God served as a source of hope for the future. Refugee women noted that God would give them what they requested in the future. Iman said, "Allah has everything. He will give me everything. Everything is waiting for the day. If I learn patience, everything will come."

In a similar vein, refugee women also believed that God gave them lessons for life by letting them pass through difficulties. They believed that God gave them the strength to resist all the odds they confronted in Addis Ababa. All the difficulties they faced were in God's plan and would make them stronger women. Refugee women believed that all these challenges were coming from Allah. So they accepted it and continued their lives. Aisha stated, "The reason why I am facing all these challenges is that Allah is going to teach me and he is going to strengthen me."

Refugee women noted that they got support when they prayed to God. They believed that God is never tired of listening to their voices, unlike those of other people. Refugee women communicated with their God through prayer. Especially for refugee women who have no friends, praying to God gives them emotional support. For example, Iman stated:

I give all my problems to Allah. People may hear you today, but they may turn away tomorrow. People become tired of you. But Allah does not get tired of you; I pray to him day and night. Since I have no one, I tell everything to Allah.

Adaptation challenges affected refugee women's mental health. Refugee women became distressed and frustrated. However, thanks to religious beliefs, refugee women cope with these

challenges. Emani stated, "I was going crazy; I'm better off in prayer. Health is wealth. I was not mentally healthy in the past. Alhamdulillah, I got my health in prayer."

#### **6.4.2. Cognitive Reappraisal**

Refugee women employed cognitive reappraisal to deal with adaptation challenges, including looking at the positive side of the challenge and being optimistic about the future. Refugee women attempted to see the positive sides of the challenges they encountered, which motivated them to cope with adaptation challenges. Aisha and Nahir both thought that the adaptation challenges they faced made them stronger. They thought that life offered them new skills through challenges. Through the difficulties they encountered, they gained experience.

For instance, Aisha had done many jobs in Addis Ababa, such as selling khat, fast foods, and coffee, doing jobs on a commission basis, and the like, to support her life financially. When she came to Ethiopia, she never thought that she would live and work like this. Facing different challenges made her a strong woman and a role model for her children. This was a source of pride for Aisha:

I don't think that I have been hurt. But the life of this country has taught me a great lesson. I learned how hard one has to work to achieve something. If my children don't lack the food they eat, if they study in a private school, and if I have money to pay for the rent, all these things show my strengths. I say that I am hurt if life makes me disabled and if I cannot fulfill the basic needs of my children. Facing different challenges has made me stronger, helped me work harder, and made me a role model for my children. I have taught my children that a mother can do anything. I have taught my children that a woman can be the breadwinner of the family, not only a man. If I were in Yemen, I would not be like this. I would not be a role model for my children. I happily tell my

children what life looks like. I teach my children that a penny is earned with a lot of sweat.

In Addis Ababa, refugee women encountered an array of adaptation challenges. Refugee women had a positive outlook on the future despite facing multiple adaptation challenges. Refugee women overcame challenges with adaptation by telling themselves that tomorrow would be a better day. The positive outlook for the future gave refugee women a sense of purpose in life. Abia said, "I do not give up. I always think that I have a good future. Of course, I face many problems. But I did not become exhausted and give up about the future."

Similarly, it had been three years and six months since Badia arrived in Addis Ababa. Throughout her entire stay in Addis Ababa, Badia encountered many adaptation challenges. Despite these challenges, Badia hoped for a better tomorrow. She planned to support both herself and other communities of refugees in the future:

I faced many interrelated challenges in this country from my first arrival until now.

However, I wouldn't say I'd like to return to my country. I decided to be a part of this community. My plan after two years will be to be a businesswoman. I don't want to be supported throughout my life. I will start supporting refugees. Since I want to open my own business, I submitted my business proposal to JRS. In my business, I want to reach not only my small community but also a larger society. I'm trying my best to open the organization and have my own business. I want to be a role model for other refugees. I don't wait for others to help me. Don't stay at home. You have to go and work. If you support yourself, others will support you. In my homeland, I faced many challenges, and then I opened an organization and became a rich woman. I used to travel to many

countries and have my car, home, and everything. But the war changed my life. So I want to start a life here, like in my country. I will have business and organization here one day.

#### **6.4.3. Venting Emotions**

Life in Addis Ababa for refugee women was stressful. To cope with this stress, some respondents vent their emotions through crying. For example, Cally stated, "I cry when things don't go as I want. Sometimes I tried to manage things through crying." Refugee women like Cally found temporary relief and relaxation from the challenges of adjustment by crying.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Discussion**

In this chapter, I show the meaning and relationships among the findings. Additionally, I put the findings in the context of previous studies. The major findings of the study including adaptation challenges, social support experiences, and coping strategies in the face of social support deficit are discussed.

#### **7.1. Adaptation Challenges**

Refugee women faced several adaptation challenges in Addis Ababa. Having a job is essential to improve refugees' well-being in their host country. However, the study's findings indicated that refugee women faced limited job opportunities in Addis Ababa. Similarly, prior studies (Dodson, 2018; Freedman et al., 2020; Kavian et al., 2020; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011; Vromans et al., 2018) found that refugee women had difficulty finding employment and earning money in their host countries. Studies carried out in Ethiopia also showed that Eritrean refugees had limited access to activities that generated income and were unable to acquire a means of subsistence (Samuel Hall, 2014; Tufa et al., 2021). On top of what is found from prior studies (Dodson, 2018; Freedman et al., 2020; Kavian et al., 2020; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011; Vromans et al., 2018), my study further revealed the negative consequences associated with limited job opportunities, and the limitations of jobs that refugee women got in the formal sector.

It is known that the limited job opportunities have left many young Ethiopian nationals unemployed in Ethiopia. However, for refugee women, the situation was worse because of unrecognized refugee identity papers and language barriers. Organizations were reluctant to hire refugee women, despite having the necessary educational backgrounds and work experience. Existing studies confirmed that the limited job opportunities for refugee women could be

attributed to refugee status (Idemudia et al., 2013) and language difficulty (Huot et al., 2021).

According to the intersectionality theory, refugee status and language barriers intersect and affect refugee women's job opportunities negatively (Hankivsky, 2014).

When refugee women's chances of being hired in the formal sector became limited, they tried to engage in self-employment. However, the lack of initial capital hindered some refugee women from achieving economic self-reliance. In line with these findings, a study conducted among refugees in Austria indicated that the lack of initial capital for self-employment was a barrier to the labor market integration of refugees (Ortlieb et al., 2020). Obtaining a business license posed an additional challenge for some refugee women. Refugee women faced challenges in obtaining business licenses due to restricted legal employment opportunities. In a similar vein, a study conducted among refugee women in Addis Ababa found that refugees faced limited job opportunities because of a lack of work permits and business capital (Jemal, 2020).

Some refugee women did not give up despite encountering difficulties issuing business licenses. They still tried another option which was working in collaboration with Ethiopian nationals. This demonstrated the dedication of the refugee women to earning a living that would enable them to survive. Working in partnership with native citizens posed a challenge for some refugee women who were betrayed by Ethiopian nationals. For other refugee women, working in partnership with Ethiopian nationals was still a viable option. This demonstrated that not all Ethiopian citizens treated refugee women in an unethical or immoral manner.

The limited job opportunities caused some refugee women to stay at home. This, in turn, resulted in distress and a feeling of hopelessness. Similar to this study, a study conducted among refugees in Australia indicated that unemployment and a lack of work opportunities contributed to symptoms of PTSD and psychological distress (Garton et al., 2022).

Earnings were constrained as a result of limited employment opportunities. Due to a lack of income, refugee women were unable to meet their basic needs. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among refugees in Greece found that the limited incomes of refugee women impacted their inability to meet basic needs (Diamond, 2019). Having children impacted how refugee women adjusted to life in Addis Ababa. Due to their low income, refugee women, in particular, who had children under the age of 18, found it difficult to satisfy their children's needs. Married refugee women with children did not get support from their spouses. Furthermore, the study's findings showed that refugee women had limited social interaction with their friends as a result of their limited income.

Sometimes, with the informational support of co-ethnic friends, some refugee women get job opportunities in the formal sector. However, refugee women had short contracts of work. In addition, refugee women received lower wages than Ethiopian citizens did for the same type of work. In line with these findings, a study conducted among refugee women and native women in Sweden found that refugee women have lower wages across the whole wage distribution compared to native-born women (Wahlberg, 2008). Receiving lower wages compared to Ethiopian nationals for the same type of work and earning little money discouraged refugee women from working.

Housing is a key element in the integration of refugees into their host countries. It is not uncommon for refugees to find affordable housing in host countries. The study's findings found that refugee women faced difficulty finding affordable housing in Addis Ababa. Although housing is a problem that affects all refugee women regardless of their characteristics, it is especially challenging for some refugee women who have children. The lack of affordable housing increased their vulnerability to economic hardship. This study's findings are supported

by studies carried out in the host countries, which found that refugee women had a housing problem (Kandasamy et al., 2014; Miketta, 2014; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011; Walsh et al., 2016). Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among Congolese refugees in Addis Ababa found that refugees faced inflated house rent (Gelila, 2019).

The cost of housing for refugee women as well as for Ethiopian citizens living in the city is expensive. Nonetheless, the housing barriers is worse for refugee women since gaining housing has been linked to discrimination based on their skin color and limited work opportunities provided to them. In a similar vein, Kaur and colleagues (2021) conducted a systematic review of qualitative studies and found that poor access to housing services was related to insufficient income assistance, immigration status, limited employment opportunities, and a lack of language skills.

Even though it was expensive, some refugee women preferred to rent condominium houses. The refugee women who were unable to rent condominiums, instead lived in compound houses. Due to a lack of affordable houses, some refugee women lived in poor housing conditions, such as cramped, small homes with inadequate amenities. This affected refugee women's physical health. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among refugees and asylum-seekers in Australia indicated that asylum-seekers reported that living in housing in poor conditions negatively affected their health (Ziersch et al., 2017).

Regarding house rent, some good landlords and ladies understood the living conditions of refugee women and tolerated them until they got the money to pay for rent. Contrary to this, there were some house lords and ladies who evicted refugee women from their homes when they passed the day of rent. Similarly, a qualitative study among Sudanese refugee women in Egypt

indicated that some Egyptian apartment owners were kind to them, whereas others were not (Edward, 2007).

Additionally, the study's findings showed that some organizations and local community members did not recognize refugee women's identity papers. As a result, refugee women were unable to get essential services. Regarding telecommunication services, the study found two contradictory findings. Some refugee women faced difficulty accessing telecommunication services due to their refugee status; other respondents did not. Additionally, refugee women were treated like Ethiopian citizens and were not required to show their identity papers at health centers and hospitals. This revealed that the recognition of the identity papers of refugee women largely depends on organizations and their employees.

The identity card of refugee women was not only ignored by some organizations but also by members of the community, particularly the house lords and ladies. The unacceptability of identity cards increased refugee women's vulnerability to social exclusion. It also hindered refugee women's sense of belonging to the local community. The lack of awareness about the refugee proclamation and refugees' rights and entitlements seemed to be the major reason for the unacceptability of refugee women's identity cards. In contrast to these findings, the literature indicated that the lack of acceptance of the identity papers of refugees was attributed to discrimination and a lack of significant relationships in the community (McDonnell, 2009).

The study's findings additionally indicated that refugee women faced an increase in prices related to their identity in areas like restaurants, shopping, and transportation. Sellers and service provider organizations did not charge local community members and refugee women the same price. Sellers and service provider organizations charged refugee women a higher price compared to Ethiopian citizens, which led them to have difficulty accessing essential goods.

The major reason for the increase in price for refugee women was a misconception among some sellers and service provider organizations that Arabs are wealthy. Specifically, refugee women were more susceptible to price increases due to their light skin color and clothing (wearing an Abaya). The theory of intersectionality explains that refugee women's refugee status, their skin color, and their style of dressing made Yemeni refugee women more susceptible to price increases (Hankivsky, 2014). However, a key factor reducing the susceptibility of refugee women to increases in price was their familiarity with the local language.

The study's findings revealed that language barriers posed many challenges for refugee women, especially in the first three years of the settlement period, in a range of contexts, including transportation, healthcare settings, educational settings, and city navigation. Similarly, according to existing studies (Huot et al., 2021; Owino, 2015; Parajuli et al., 2019; Qutranji et al., 2020; Watkins et al., 2012), refugee women face language barriers in various settings in their host countries.

The language barrier limited refugee women's social interaction with the local community. In a similar vein, studies done in Ethiopia with Eritrean refugees (Aida, 2017) and the Great Lakes Region (Suleyman, 2014) revealed that refugees had difficulties socially integrating with the local community due to language barriers. Contrary to Aida's (2017) and Suleyman's (2014) studies, my study further indicated that language barriers affected refugee women's job opportunities negatively. Hence, the language difficulty not only affected refugee women's social integration but also their economic integration.

The study's findings indicated that refugee women faced obstacles to getting an education. The findings of the study demonstrated that language barriers prevented refugee women from pursuing short-term courses. Refugee women struggled to understand the local

language. In line with this study, previous studies conducted among refugees indicated that language was a barrier to refugees' education (Avery & Said, 2017; Kek & Huijser, 2011; Streitwieser et al., 2017). Similarly, a study conducted among Karen refugees in Australia revealed that the biggest issue harming their well-being is their inability to communicate and speak the local language (English) fluently (Watkins et al., 2012).

Additionally, a study conducted among Sudanese refugees in Australia indicated that refugees faced significant language challenges while trying to access educational opportunities (Kek & Huijser, 2011). Moreover, a study conducted among Syrian refugees in Turkey showed that language was considered to be the biggest obstacle to refugees' educational and social integration (Ibesh et al., 2021). According to these studies, local languages were used as the medium for instruction in the host countries, which presented challenges for refugees all over the world trying to access education and short-term courses.

The findings of the study also showed that limited income was another obstacle to refugee women's education. The limited income affected refugee women's education negatively. Refugee women could not continue their education due to the difficulty of paying tuition and fees to private colleges. Similarly, studies carried out in host countries (Buckner et al., 2017; Ibesh et al., 2021; Shamieh et al., 2022; Tulibaleka, 2022) indicated that one of the major obstacles to education for refugees was limited income. Studies conducted in Ethiopia also revealed that economic issues constitute a barrier to the education of Eritrean and Somali refugees (Redeit, 2015; Yared, 2020). Refugees tended to have low incomes since there were few employment opportunities available to them. Their professional and personal development was thus adversely impacted by their underemployment.

Some of the refugee women's children also faced language barriers both at the primary and secondary levels in the initial period of arrival. In a similar vein, previous studies (Alebachew, 2016; Namak et al., 2022; Subasi Singh et al., 2021) revealed that language barriers were an issue for refugee children attending school. Refugee children also suffered from interrupted education as a result of the war. This, in turn, had a detrimental effect on the academic achievement of refugee children. In a similar vein, McWilliams and Bonet's (2016) study found that young refugees' education was adversely impacted by their interrupted educational background. Another obstacle to refugee children's education was the unwillingness of government schools to admit them. Similarly, a prior study (Akesson et al., 2020) revealed that a lack of recognition of certification by schools was a barrier to refugee children's education.

Refugee children were also the targets of bullying and discrimination at school because of differences in language and skin color. Refugee children were thereafter discouraged from going to school. Likewise, prior studies (Correa-Velez et al., 2017; Shamieh et al., 2022; Tulibaleka, 2022) demonstrated that prejudice was encountered by refugee children in educational settings. Specifically, according to a study in Uganda, schools stigmatized and discriminated against refugee children (Tulibaleka, 2022). Additionally, a survey study among refugees in Jordan found that one of the difficulties faced by refugees in schools was being the target of bullying (Shamieh et al., 2022). Refugee children were the target of bullying in schools due to cultural and language differences (Seker & Sirkeci, 2015).

The study's findings revealed that refugee women also faced cultural differences in Addis Ababa. Refugee women observed individualistic ways of life in Addis Ababa, which were different from their collectivist culture. Refugee women also found that sitting closely together with men on public transport, the Ethiopian cultural food (Injera), bars, music, and girls working

as waitresses in hotels and cafes were strange to them. Similarly, prior studies indicated that refugees faced different cultures and ways of life in their host countries (Almohamed & Vyas, 2016; Gurer, 2019; Stewart et al., 2015). A qualitative study conducted among South Sudanese unaccompanied refugee children in Jewi Refugee Camp in Ethiopia indicated that refugee children experienced a different culture and way of life from the local community (Gatwech, 2017).

The study also found that refugee women faced social isolation. Being separated from family members, relatives, and friends caused refugee women to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation. In line with this study, several studies indicated that refugee women faced social isolation in destination countries (Evans et al., 2022; Kandasamy et al., 2014; Mangrio et al., 2019; Olukotun et al., 2019; Owino & Weber, 2020; Parajuli et al., 2019; Qutranji et al., 2020; Saksena & McMorrow, 2021; Vromans et al., 2018). Likewise, a study conducted among Eritrean refugees residing in camps in Ethiopia revealed that refugees faced a high degree of social isolation (Samuel Hall, 2014).

Informal social networks are crucial in promoting the well-being of refugee women. Refugee women lacked the previous informal social networks to turn to when problems arose. They kept all their suffering inside themselves. Refugee women faced loneliness as they lost the previous social network that provided them with comfort and safety. Refugee women reported feeling socially isolated as a result of linguistic and cultural barriers. As evidence for this study, previous studies found that social isolation among refugee women in host countries was a result of cultural differences in customs and traditions (Al-Shar & Al-Tarawneh, 2019), language barriers, and acculturative stress (Stewart, 2014).

Moreover, the study's findings indicated that refugee women received little protection from police officers in Addis Ababa. Refugee women did not get protection from police officers because of their refugee status and identity. Police officers were not aware of their mandate to protect refugees residing in Addis Ababa. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among refugee women in Addis Ababa revealed that police officers were apathetic towards refugee women's legal cases (Hiba, 2018). Additionally, a qualitative study conducted among Congolese refugees in Addis Ababa found that refugees faced uncooperative law enforcement bodies, particularly police, during their stay in Addis Ababa (Gelila, 2019). Police officers tended to protect only Ethiopian citizens.

The study revealed that refugee women experienced sexual harassment by men in Addis Ababa, including in hospitals, and at places of work. The sexual harassment of refugee women was compounded by their refugee status and gender. In line with these findings, previous studies indicated that refugee women faced sexual harassment both within and outside of refugee camps (Al-Shar & Al-Tarawneh, 2019; Freedman et al., 2020; Gelila, 2019; Hossain et al., 2018; Krause, 2020; Kwiringira et al., 2018; Lalla et al., 2020; Mwangi, 2012; Yonas, 2013). Moreover, a qualitative study conducted among Congolese refugee women in Addis Ababa found that refugee women faced sexual harassment and sexual violence in Addis Ababa (Gelila, 2019).

## **7.2. Social Support Experiences of Refugee Women**

The study's findings revealed that refugee women had two sources of social support: formal and informal.

### **7.2.1. Formal Support Sources**

The adaptation challenges that refugee women faced were several and interconnected. In exile, formal support sources play a paramount role in refugee women's well-being. Migration to another country results in the loss of existing informal social networks and support (Simich et al., 2005). The loss of such support following migration forced refugee women to turn to formal support sources. One of the major formal support sources for refugees was humanitarian organizations working with refugees.

The study's findings showed that refugee women mainly received support from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, namely UNHCR, JRS, and EOC-DICAC. Refugee women received various forms of instrumental support from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. Refugee women indicated the importance of UNHCR's financial support for their well-being. UNHCR's financial support subsidized refugee women's house rent. Some women refugees would be forced to live on the streets if UNHCR did not provide financial assistance. In a similar vein, a qualitative study conducted among young Middle Eastern refugees in Australia indicated that the financial support they received from resettlement helped young refugees adapt to living in Australia (Liamputtong & Kurban, 2018).

Refugee women, however, reported that the UNHCR's financial support was insufficient and did not meet their necessities, regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics. Even though living expenses were rising frequently, UNHCR's financial support remained unchanged and did not keep pace with the rising costs of living. The financial support given to them did not

match the current cost of living. Refugee women who have children were likewise unhappy with the support that UNHCR provided. They indicated it was insufficient. In line with this study, a study conducted among urban refugees in Addis Ababa revealed that refugees were dissatisfied with the amount of financial support they received from UNHCR (Brown et al., 2018).

Additionally, a qualitative study conducted among Chin refugee women in India revealed that refugee women reported that they did not receive enough subsistence allowance from UNHCR, and staff members did not provide them with enough assistance (Jops et al., 2019).

To improve their financial situation, some refugee women registered at UNHCR as a separate family, even though they did have family in Addis Ababa. This demonstrated how refugee women's economic insecurity compelled them to deceive UNHCR and RRS employees.

Refugee women reported that the UNHCR sometimes deposited their cash assistance late making it difficult for them to pay their rent on time. Conversely, refugee women expressed their happiness with the accessibility of UNHCR's financial support. Refugee women were not faced with bureaucratic hurdles while obtaining financial support, in contrast to other forms of support offered by humanitarian organizations working with refugees.

Refugee women received material support from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. This included food rations and bedding, hygiene materials, and milk powder support. Refugee women acknowledged the importance of the material assistance they were given. Thanks to the material support, they were able to manage the financial burden of buying hygiene products, milk powder, food rations, and bedding. Nevertheless, there was an insufficient and infrequent provision of material support. The amount of material support was adversely impacted by the refugee influx. After receiving food rations and bedding, a refugee woman must wait until other refugees receive them. Most refugee women received this kind of

support once during their stay in Addis Ababa. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among South Sudanese unaccompanied refugee children in a Jewi refugee camp in Ethiopia indicated that refugee children were not happy with the untimely provision of basic needs, such as food (Gatwech, 2017). Moreover, a qualitative study conducted among Sudanese refugee women in Kenya indicated that there was a high number of complaints regarding the amount of food that was given to the refugee women by the UNHCR (Gladden, 2013).

Refugee women had concerns about delays and quality when it came to support for sanitary items. Refugee women reported that hygiene items were given to them late on some occasions. As they attempted to maintain their hygiene on their own, this put a financial strain on refugee women.

Moreover, refugee women received training support including English language, computer, and technical and vocational. The training supports were given to help refugees establish a livelihood through paid work or self-employment which were viable options for refugee women's limited job opportunities. Refugee women expressed gratitude to humanitarian organizations for providing them with training support since it enabled them to gain the necessary knowledge and skills. Likewise, a qualitative study conducted among OCP beneficiaries of Eritrean refugees indicated that refugees were delighted to receive training support from humanitarian organizations (Aida, 2017).

Nevertheless, refugee women were mostly unemployed despite possessing the required skills, knowledge, and certificates in some technical and vocational fields of study. This was because they lacked the initial capital and were unable to obtain business licenses due to their refugee status; these obstacles prevented refugee women from earning a living.

The medical allowance was the other form of assistance. Refugee women were delighted when they obtained the EOC-DICAC medical allowance. The EOC-DICAC adopted the approach of refunding the money that refugee women had paid for medical care at public hospitals or health centers. There were two reasons why refugee women were not happy with this approach. First of all, refugee women were left without the money to pay for hospital or health center services provided by the government. Second, despite obtaining money for treatment, the refugee women continued to express dissatisfaction with EOC-DICAC's slowness in returning their money.

When a prescription medication costs more than 800 Birr or is unavailable from the pharmacy with which EOC-DICAC has a contract, EOC-DICAC supplies medicine to refugee women. Refugee women were not happy with this approach for three reasons: EOC-DICAC bought low quality medicine for them; EOC-DICAC staff were unavailable when refugee women went to request for support; and EOC-DICAC failed to buy and supply the medication on time.

In addition, refugee women expressed dissatisfaction with the EOC-DICAC's ambulatory service due to its unavailability or delays. Refugee women also expressed complaints about the government health care facilities and hospitals' poor quality of care, as well as the lengthy wait times for appointments. In line with these findings, a qualitative study conducted among refugee women in Addis Ababa revealed that refugee women express dissatisfaction with the medical services, citing factors such as lengthy wait times for treatment, a lack of prescription medication, the use of generic instead of "brand" medications, and the DICAC ambulance taking longer than expected to reach critically ill patients (Hiba, 2018). Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among South Sudanese unaccompanied refugee children in a Jewi refugee camp in

Ethiopia revealed that refugee children were dissatisfied with the health services provided by the hospital (Gatwech, 2017). Additionally, a qualitative study conducted among Sudanese refugee women in Kenya found that refugee women were dissatisfied with the medicine and treatment received from the hospital (Gladden, 2013).

In contrast to the findings of my study, a qualitative study conducted among Burmese, Bhutanese, and Iraqi refugees resettled in the United States found that refugees expressed satisfaction with the medical care they had received after coming to the United States (Hauck et al., 2014). One possible explanation for the difference is Ethiopia's and the United States's differing economic capacities.

The other type of support was an educational allowance. Refugee women with children received an educational allowance for their children who enrolled from kindergarten to grade 12. Refugee women expressed gratitude for the educational allowance they were given, which helped them pay for the materials their children needed for school. Refugee women also received daycare services at humanitarian organizations. For some refugee women, JRS served as a place for socialization. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among Congolese women in the United States indicated that refugee women framed the resettlement agency as a whole in familial and relational terms (Wachter et al., 2021). JRS helped refugee women build networks with their ethnic communities, find friends, and provide a place to talk about their problems.

In general, refugee women accessed various kinds of support from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. However, they encountered barriers while accessing this support. One of the barriers for refugee women to accessing support was language. Refugee women received services from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations in the local and English languages. Refugee women also received services in their mother tongue through volunteer

refugees. Attempting to provide services to refugee women in their mother tongue is a step forward. However, refugee women were unable to access interpreters due to the small number of volunteer refugees employed by humanitarian organizations. As a result, some refugee women faced difficulties communicating in the local language with health professionals in a health setting. Similarly, according to previous studies (Arnold et al., 2014; Bains et al., 2021; Jiwrajka et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2017; Makwarimba et al., 2013; Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019; Nara et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2018; Stewart et al., 2015), refugee women face barriers when trying to access health services in host countries due to their difficulty understanding the local language.

Likewise, a qualitative study conducted among refugee children in Addis Ababa indicated that refugee children faced language barriers while they were trying to receive services at humanitarian organizations (Barkeal, 2021). The difficulty of communicating in English has also impacted the lives of refugee women in a variety of settings, including healthcare settings (hospitals and clinics) and educational settings (computer, technical, and vocational training). The language barriers might be attributed to the lack of a center that gave local language training to refugee women.

The study found that information about the existing support packages offered by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations was not available to refugee women. Even the refugee women who were aware of the available support programs could not get the support they needed due to a lack of information about how to access them. Likewise, previous studies indicated that refugee women were not aware of the available support due to a lack of information (Fellin et al., 2013; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Habersack et al., 2011; Henry et al., 2020; O'Mahony et al., 2012; Qutranji et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2018). Additionally, a qualitative study conducted

among Eritrean refugee women in Addis Ababa indicated that refugee women encountered a lack of knowledge about the support available from humanitarian organizations (Kidist, 2016).

Unlike of studies (Fellin et al., 2013; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Habersack et al., 2011; Henry et al., 2020; O'Mahony et al., 2012; Qutranji et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2018), my study explains the reason behind the lack of awareness of existing support programs and indicates that language barriers were the reason for this. In a similar vein, a qualitative study conducted among refugee women in Addis Ababa revealed that refugee women were unaware of their rights to healthcare services due to a lack of information (Hiba, 2018). The study further indicated the language barrier compounded refugee women's lack of information. Moreover, a qualitative study among resettled Syrian refugee women in Canada revealed that language differences between refugee women and healthcare providers made refugee women more vulnerable to inadequate knowledge of support programs (Cameron et al., 2022). Another explanation is that, as per social capital theory, there are fewer connections or linking capital between refugee women and humanitarian organizations working with refugees (Putnam, 1995).

The study's findings also showed that refugee women encountered high transportation costs while they were trying to access support. Because of the high cost of transportation, refugee women were unable to get some forms of support from humanitarian organizations. Parallel to this study, a qualitative study among Congolese refugee women in the United States revealed that refugee women faced transportation problems as one of the barriers to accessing healthcare services (McMorrow & Saksena, 2017). Additionally, a study conducted among Zimbabwean and Sudanese refugees in Canada found that refugee new parents faced transportation problems while they tried to access childbearing and parenting programs (Stewart et al., 2017). In contrast to other studies (McMorrow & Saksena, 2017; Stewart et al., 2017), my

study revealed an explanation for refugee women's inability to cover the costs of transportation to get available support. This was due to a lack of financial resources.

Certain types of support, like receiving hygiene supplies, nearly matched the costs of transportation that refugee women had to pay to obtain the support. Consequently, refugee women were reluctant to seek support from humanitarian organizations and attempted to use their own money to compensate for it. This added another financial burden to the already minimal financial resources of refugee women.

Refugee women received transportation allowances from humanitarian organizations when they took skills training. The transport allowance, however, did not meet the refugee women's actual transport costs. As a result, refugee women were forced to discontinue their skill-training courses. Long-term economic self-reliance for refugee women could be achieved through participation in skills training. On the other hand, not taking skills training due to an insufficient transportation allowance would negatively affect refugee women's economic well-being.

The study's findings also indicated that when refugee women tried to get support, they were treated poorly by those who offered it. As a result, they stopped seeking support and instead used their own money to meet their needs. The financial capacity of refugee women was thus adversely impacted. Similarly, existing studies indicated that support providers' unfriendly treatment was one of the barriers for refugee women to accessing social services (Freedman et al., 2020; Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019; Nara et al., 2020; Rizkalla et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2018). According to Newaz and Riediger (2020), support providers' unfriendly treatment might be due to language differences and a lack of cultural competence among support providers.

The findings of the study also showed that when refugee women sought support, support providers did not respond promptly. This made refugee women less likely to get support from humanitarian organizations, further exacerbating their precarious situation. In line with this study, a study conducted by Stewart et al. (2008) among refugees and immigrants in Canada revealed that newcomers experienced unmet support needs due to service providers' bureaucratic constraints. Service untimeliness (Erucar et al., 2022) and administrative barriers (Lloyd et al., 2023) might be contributing factors to delays in support delivery.

Moreover, the study revealed that unmet survival needs were a major barrier to refugee women's attempts to access support from humanitarian organizations. Refugee women preferred getting their basic needs met over receiving skill-building training from humanitarian organizations. In a similar vein, a qualitative study conducted among Eritrean refugees indicated that refugees prioritized their survival needs over an opportunity to get training support from humanitarian organizations (Aida, 2017). Receiving training support would increase employment opportunities for refugee women in the long run. According to Kim and colleagues (2017), the reason for prioritizing survival needs over training support might be attributed to refugee women's precarious economic status.

Childcare responsibility was another factor limiting refugee women's access to support at refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. The caregiving responsibilities of refugee women impacted their access to skill training support. This, in turn, negatively affected refugee women's economic well-being and personal development in the long run. The informal social networks refugee women might depend on for childcare were limited, which worsened their problem of accessing support. Similarly, existing literature indicated that childcare responsibility affected refugee women's access to healthcare services (Caulford & Rahunathan, 2019) and the ability to

engage in and continue in education (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Namak et al., 2022; Senthanaar et al., 2020). In contrast to earlier studies (Caulford & Rahunathan, 2019; Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Namak et al., 2022; Senthanaar et al., 2020), the reasons why refugee women's access to skill training support diminished were further examined in my study. According to the study, this is because the informal social networks that refugee women may rely on for childcare tend to be limited.

According to the study's findings, community leaders unfairly recruited refugee women for support. Refugee women accused community leaders of recruiting refugees based mainly on friendship rather than vulnerability to receiving support. Some refugee women were disadvantaged as a result of discriminatory practices made by community leaders. This might be due to a lack of open communication between community leaders and refugee women.

The study's findings also indicated that, unlike other refugee groups, refugee women were not treated equally by some staff members of humanitarian organizations. It is just and acceptable to give priority to the refugee groups who are most in need. It was also reasonable for humanitarian organizations to prioritize supporting refugee groups who were not receiving monthly financial aid from UNHCR. However, having a biased attitude toward refugee women based on misconceptions made them more vulnerable. Additionally, it conveyed to refugee women the idea that certain refugee groups received special attention from humanitarian organizations but they were overlooked. The biased attitude was practiced not because of racial prejudice but rather because of the misconception that the Yemeni Embassy supported Yemeni refugees. In contrast to this study, existing studies (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019, 2019; Schmidt et al., 2018) indicated that refugee women faced discriminatory practices based on race when accessing support in their host countries.

The findings of the study revealed that, although refugee-serving humanitarian organizations provided free support, refugee women in Addis Ababa encountered multiple barriers when attempting to obtain it. This has been exacerbated by gaps in the system. Removing the barriers that prevent refugee women from receiving support is needed from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations.

In general, the support provided by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations was relevant for the survival of refugee women. However, the support emphasized the physical needs of refugee women, neglecting their other needs. Even the support that focuses on refugee women's physical needs was limited and could not cater to their support needs and expectations. Moreover, the support that refugee women received from humanitarian organizations was temporary and inaccessible. Due to minimum supports, refugee women cannot improve their social, emotional, and economic problems, which has kept them vulnerable. Hence, increased social support is needed to help refugees thrive, not just survive (Das & Chan, 2013). Refugees thrive when the social support provided are sensitive to their needs (Stewart, 2014).

### **7.2.2. Informal Support Sources**

The study's findings indicated that refugee women received various types of social support from family, friends, and independent sponsors. Refugee women received instrumental support from their family members. Many refugees rely heavily on their families to help them make sense of and organize their experiences (Chun, 2006). Study findings indicated that refugee women received instrumental support, specifically financial support, from their family members, such as children, siblings, and parents.

The financial support that the refugee women got from family members covered some of their expenses. Some refugee women received financial support from abroad, while others

received it from families who were in Addis Ababa. In line with the study's findings, studies conducted among Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa revealed that refugees' livelihoods relied on the remittances they received from their family members (Aida, 2017; Kidist, 2016) . Some refugee women were primarily dependent on family members for material and financial support. This suggested that refugee women had limited alternatives to earn money or did not receive enough support from other sources.

Studies have shown that family members' instrumental support is essential to refugees' adaptation processes in their host countries (Hynie et al., 2011; Xiong et al., 2021). For instance, a study conducted among Hmong, Syrian, and Somali refugees in the United States indicated that financial and educational support from family members helped them settle into their host country (Xiong et al., 2021). The material and financial support somewhat alleviated the economic hardships faced by refugee women. However, refugee women reported that their family members provided insufficient and inconsistent financial assistance. According to Hynie and colleagues (2011), the existence of family did not ensure that immigrant and refugee women would obtain the help they needed.

Refugee women also received financial and material support from friends. Most refugee women received instrumental support from ethnic-like friends. Social interaction between refugee women and other refugee communities, as well as the local community, was minimal. According to social capital theory, people who have similar characteristics are more likely to form social bonds with each other (Putnam, 2007). Because they do not socialize with people who are from different ethnic groups, refugee women can have less bridging capital (interactions). Stating it differently, refugee women often lack ties to other refugee groups, and instead usually have more ties with ethnic-similar friends.

Though their ethnic-like friends were not economically strong, refugee women were still able to rely on them for assistance when they suffered from severe health problems or lost loved ones. This suggested that the Yemeni community had a supportive culture in times of difficulty. Consistent with the findings of my study, earlier studies revealed that friends are the primary source of instrumental support for refugees (Hynie et al., 2011; Liamputtong et al., 2016; Maung et al., 2021; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011).

Moreover, refugee women received financial and material support from independent sponsors, particularly during holidays and at times of facing serious health problems. Refugee women expressed gratitude to friends, family, and independent sponsors for their instrumental support. However, the amount of support received from these sources was insufficient.

The study's findings also revealed that refugee women received emotional support from informal support sources. The emotional support included encouragement, sympathy, listening, caring, and sharing feelings, which helped refugee women overcome some adaptation challenges. Refugee women sometimes received emotional support from the members of their closest families who lived in Addis Ababa. Refugee women also received emotional support from left-behind family members in Yemen. This suggested that refugee women found emotional support from a transnational source. For refugees, transnational sources of moral and emotional support are crucial (Baldassar, 2007). In line with this study, multiple studies (Arnetz et al., 2013; Atari-Khan et al., 2021; Chase & Sapkota, 2017; Goodman et al., 2017; Hynie et al., 2011; Löbel, 2020; Tingvold et al., 2012; Weine et al., 2014; Xiong et al., 2021) indicated that family members' emotional support is crucial in promoting refugees' well-being in their host countries.

Refugee women also received emotional support at times from friends. Most of the time, refugee women receive emotional support from friends in the same ethnic group. According to social capital theory, refugee women did not develop bridging capital through friendships with non-Yemenis, who may provide them with access to other support (Putnam, 2007). In other words, refugee women's social networks lacked bridging capital.

Refugee women felt more connected to someone because of the emotional support they received from their friends making it easier to handle different adaptation challenges. In a similar vein, prior studies revealed that friends are those who provide refugees with emotional support during adaptation time in their host countries (Chase & Sapkota, 2017; Hynie et al., 2011; Olukotun et al., 2019; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011). Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among refugee women in Australia revealed that the emotional support refugee women received from their peers in the group enabled them to deal with a variety of challenges (Liamputtong et al., 2016).

Family members and friends who share a similar ethnic background provided refugee women with informational support for a variety of issues, including the available social support programs at refugee-serving humanitarian organizations and jobs in the formal sector. This indicated that friends and family filled the void in the humanitarian organization's outreach to refugees by publicizing their support programs. In a similar vein, a study conducted among Syrian refugees in Canada revealed that family and friends' informational support helped refugees to access employment and housing (Hanley et al., 2018). Particularly, prior studies indicated that family is the source of informational support for refugees in their destination countries (Hynie et al., 2011; Xiong et al., 2021). In a similar vein, a qualitative study conducted

among Syrian refugees in Canada revealed that families are valuable resources for information regarding the Canadian healthcare system (Mahajan et al., 2022).

Moreover, previous studies indicated that friends became the major source of information for new arrivals (Hynie et al., 2011; Olukotun et al., 2019). Likewise, a qualitative study conducted among immigrants and refugees in Canada revealed that new arrivals ask refugees who spent longer periods in Canada for information on a variety of issues (Stewart et al., 2008). According to social network theory, it is essential to have access to a social network to receive social support (Hanley et al., 2018). Social network theory also asserts that social relationships play an important role in providing information.

In short, refugee women received informational, emotional, and instrumental support from informal social networks, especially from family members and friends. For longer-lasting social and economic integration, social networks must diversify and grow, even though friends and family are still vital sources of support (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Generally, refugee women were willing to receive support from both formal and informal support sources. Receiving support from formal and informal support sources gave refugee women the sense that there was someone nearer to them. In line with these findings, a study conducted among Zimbabwean and Sudanese refugees in Canada revealed that refugee new parents willingly sought out support from informal networks in addition to formal sources, but they preferred help from kin (Stewart et al., 2017).

### **7.3. Coping Strategies**

Refugee women encountered multiple adaptation challenges, including economic challenges, identity-related challenges, linguistic and socio-cultural challenges, and gender-related challenges. These adaptation challenges had a negative impact on their well-being. They

used social support from formal and informal sources to cope with these adaptation challenges. However, refugee women's social support systems were inadequate, inaccessible, or not available to deal with the multiple adaptation challenges they faced in Addis Ababa. The inadequacy, inaccessibility, and unavailability of social support were a major concern for refugee women. During this time, refugee women responded to the adaptation challenges using various coping strategies.

To cope with economic-related challenges, refugee women engaged in various income-generating activities. Refugee women worked in street vending. Similar findings from earlier studies indicated that refugees used street vending as a means of subsistence in their host countries (Crabtree, 2010; Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2017; Rugunanan & Smit, 2011; Teye & Yebleh, 2015). For refugee women, street vending appeared to be an inexpensive economic opportunity. They did not need a large start-up capital for this income-generating activity. Given they were financially weak, businesses that did not cost refugee women huge amounts of money, like street vending, were a viable option to cope with their economic-related challenges. Nonetheless, refugee women risked their lives to do this type of work. Refugee women would risk being hit by a car in an attempt to flee from the local authorities. Due to their financial hardships and lack of employment options in the formal sector, refugee women were compelled to take a risk to engage in this type of income-generating activity.

For most refugee women, obtaining employment in the formal sector does not depend on their level of education. A few refugee women, however, were able to support themselves by teaching Arabic in private schools, thanks to their particular educational backgrounds. For educated refugee women, teaching in private schools was a means of generating income. Refugee women tutored children at home in addition to teaching Arabic in schools. According to

previous studies (Greaves et al., 2019; Oh & Van Der Stouwe, 2008), refugees are employed as teachers to generate income for their survival. Nonetheless, refugee women who taught at private schools complained that their pay was insufficient. Forced migrants were forced to accept low-paying jobs to meet their basic needs (Abdel et al., 2014). A qualitative study conducted among Kurdish internally-displaced women in Turkey indicated that women worked in low-paying jobs as a coping strategy (Kuloğlu, 2013). Although working such jobs did not provide sufficient income for refugee women, it did provide them with a sense of purpose.

For some refugee women, preparing and selling food and frankincense was a source of income. Capitalizing on their experience in cooking and frankincense preparation was a survival strategy for refugee women. But the only people to whom refugee women could sell their goods were those in their informal social networks, particularly those who shared the same ethnic background. The inability of refugee women to be issued Tin numbers prevented them from selling their products to supermarkets. As a result, the income of refugee women was limited.

For refugee women, commission work was a different form of income-generating activity. In line with this study, a study conducted among refugees in Addis Ababa revealed that refugees engaged in labour work to generate income for survival (Jemal, 2020). Furthermore, a study of displaced women from Darfur in Sudan showed that women used a variety of survival strategies, including wage labor (Abdel et al., 2014). Refugee women sometimes gave fake identities to the people they worked with. They were forced to lie about who they were to keep their jobs and income. Acting like someone to get along with people is normal, but providing false information about oneself to those you work with revealed just how dire the financial circumstances were for the refugee women.

Working as cashiers or caretakers was another form of income-earning activity for refugee women. Likewise, a study conducted among migrant African women in South Africa found that to support their economic lives, female migrants were engaged in feminized labor, such as domestic and care work (Dodson, 2018). In addition, a study conducted among Syrian refugees in Germany indicated that women engaged in wage-earning employment to cope with economic deprivations (Crabtree, 2010). These jobs did not require them to have an Ethiopian identity card. However, short-term contracts were granted to refugee women. Some refugee women earned money by sewing clothes at home. However, the owner of the houses complained to the refugee women about the noise made by the sewing machine.

The study's findings also showed that refugee women who had valued possessions (decorative items, land, houses, and furniture) sold them to fill their financial deficits. Similarly, a qualitative study among Sudanese refugee women in Kenya found that refugee women sold possessions as a coping strategy, particularly in filling their physical needs (Gladden, 2013). The sale of personal adornment revealed the severity of financial difficulties refugee women faced.

To get out of their financial weakness, some refugee women married local men. Similarly, previous studies (Chekero, 2018; Nabulsi et al., 2020) suggested that marriage to local men was a strategy employed by refugee women to lessen their financial problems in their host countries. Marriages between refugee women and local men may be common since the refugee women are living within the host community. But when their financial weakness forced them to marry local men, it meant that refugee women were in a desperate economic situation. Even after marrying local men, refugee women encountered deception from their spouses, which further disadvantaged them. Unlike the case in our study where economic need is the reason to marry

local men, Rohingya refugee women in Bangladesh form marriage relationships with locals to combat loneliness and enhance their social security (Sultana et al., 2023).

Moreover, refugee women prioritize spending money as a survival strategy. They spent their money only on basic needs and emergency expenses. Given their financial weakness, spending money for basic needs and emergencies was common among refugees. However, refugee women often refrained from spending time with their friends due to financial constraints. Not spending time with their friends would negatively affect refugee women's social well-being.

Refugee women rented houses on Addis Ababa's outskirts to cope with the housing problem. Refugee women paid less money for rent on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, which gave them some financial relief. In line with these findings, a qualitative study conducted among refugees in Addis Ababa indicated that refugee women resided in the city outskirts to cope with the rising cost of housing (Hiba, 2018). However, the cost of transportation to get to the downtown area to receive assistance from humanitarian organizations was often unaffordable.

Additionally, refugee women used to live in small rental houses to cope with housing problems. Using this coping strategy posed some challenges for refugee women, such as a lack of open space for praying, limited space for study, and a lack of privacy. To cope with housing problems, refugee women shared a room with family members. Similarly, previous studies indicated that refugees shared apartments as one of their coping strategies to deal with housing problems (Jemal, 2020; Walsh et al., 2016).

For some refugee women, sharing a room with family members was a challenge, as they perceived it as an invasion of privacy. Likewise, studies conducted among refugees indicated that refugees reported that sharing a room with other family members led to overcrowding and a lack of privacy (Smit & Rugunanan, 2015; Walsh et al., 2016). In general, the coping strategies

that refugee women employed to deal with housing problems saved their cost of rental accommodation. This, in turn, enabled them to purchase food items for their family.

The current study's findings also indicated that refugee women used various strategies to cope with identity-related challenges, specifically an increase in price related to identity. Refugee women sent Ethiopian citizens to the shop as a coping strategy for increased prices that targeted their identity. Some Ethiopian nationals tried to smooth the adaptation experiences of refugee women. Local communities may serve as a bridge between the host community and refugees, as well as a means of opposing prevailing malpractices (Erden, 2017).

When refugee women went to a shop or other marketplace wearing an Abaya, sellers increased the price of goods. In a similar vein, a qualitative study of Eritrean refugee women in Ethiopia found that Eritrean OCP beneficiaries hide themselves or pretended to be Ethiopian as a coping strategy to deal with discrimination (Kidist, 2016). Additionally, a qualitative study among refugee women in Germany revealed that Muslim refugee women who wear hijab frequently encounter discrimination in quite different ways than those who do not (Paz & Kook, 2021).

When they went to marketplaces, refugee women stopped wearing the Abaya to avoid a price increase. For refugee women, wearing an Abaya is a cultural and religious obligation. However, to prevent a price increase, refugee women were compelled to remove their Abaya. Their actions were against their religious and cultural norms, which caused them to clash with family members. In contrast to my study, a Palestinian refugee woman reported that wearing a hijab was part of their identity after moving to Iceland, and they maintained their Islamic faith and culture (Kristjánsdóttir & Skaptadóttir, 2019).

Furthermore, the difficulty of refugee women communicating with sellers in the local market left them vulnerable to price increases. Limited Amharic vocabulary was used by refugee women on their shopping trips to avoid their limited ability to speak the local language being picked out by sellers. However, for refugee women, this coping mechanism was not be a long-term solution.

Refugee women also used avoidance as a coping strategy to deal with identity-related challenges. In a similar vein, prior studies (Walther et al., 2021; Zbidat et al., 2020) indicated that refugees used avoidance as one of their coping strategies for post-migration stressors. For instance, a study conducted among adult refugees in Germany revealed that adult refugees employed withdrawal from stressors and distance from hardships as coping strategies to overcome the adversities they face (Walther et al., 2021).

The theory of stress and coping states that coping is a process that changes depending on the context of a situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, refugee women employed different coping strategies to cope with linguistic and socio-cultural challenges, such as language learning and rehearsal strategies and participating in social gatherings. These coping strategies helped refugee women deal with adaptation challenges such as language problems, cultural differences, and social isolation.

Particularly, refugee women used virtual communication tools to cope with social isolation. Refugee women connected with their informal social networks left behind by using applications that enabled voice and video conversations. Separation from family and loved ones affected the mental health of refugee women. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted among Sudanese refugees in Australia indicated that to close the gap, refugees used several strategies, such as staying in touch via information and communication technology (Savic et al., 2013).

The study's findings revealed that religious belief was one of the coping strategies employed by refugee women to deal with various adversaries. Refugee women's belief in God had a positive impact on their well-being. In line with this study, several studies indicated that spirituality, faith, and religion are important for coping with refugees' post-migration challenges (Chung et al., 2012; Eid & Diah, 2019; Hasan et al., 2018; Hawkes et al., 2021; Kidist, 2016; Maung et al., 2021; Olukotun et al., 2019; Oviedo et al., 2022; Zbidat et al., 2020).

In a similar vein, a qualitative study among Liberian refugees in Ghana found that engaging in religious activities served as a coping strategy for the challenges that they encountered adjusting to their new life (Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2017). Moreover, a study conducted in Ethiopia documented that Eritrean refugee women used reading the Bible and going to church to deal with adaptation challenges (Kidist, 2016).

Venting emotions was another coping strategy used by refugee women to cope with multiple adversaries. In line with these findings, a qualitative study conducted among Syrian refugees in Germany revealed that refugees used crying as a coping strategy for post-migration stressors (Zbidat et al., 2020).

The other coping strategy employed by refugee women was cognitive reappraisal. Refugee women looked at the positive side of the challenge and were optimistic about the future. Using these coping strategies helped them cope with the various adaptation challenges they faced in Addis Ababa. Similarly, prior studies (Khawaja et al., 2008; Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012; Walther et al., 2021; Zbidat et al., 2020) indicated that refugees used cognitive reframing as a coping strategy for post-migration stressors.

Similarly, a qualitative study among Burmese refugee women in the United States found that cognitive reappraisal was one of the coping strategies employed by refugee women to deal with adaptation stressors (Maung et al., 2021).

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This chapter incorporated three sections. The first section describes the study's conclusions drawn from the findings. The second section describes the study's implications. This section includes two sub-sections. The first sub-section describes the study's general implications for the government, refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, local community members, and other concerned bodies. The second sub-section describes the study's implications for social work education, practice, research, and policy. The third and last section describes some of the limitations of the study.

#### **8.1. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa. The study specifically focused on the adaptation challenges, social support experiences, and coping strategies of refugee women. To achieve this objective, I used a descriptive-phenomenological approach.

Refugee women faced several challenges in Addis Ababa including, economic, identity-related, linguistic and socio-cultural, and gender-related challenges. While some of the challenges that refugee women faced were observed during their early adaptation periods and lessened after a few years, others are still ongoing. The major economic challenges that refugee women faced were limited job opportunities and low or no income and housing problems. These challenges were appraised as the most severe challenges by respondents. The economic challenges limited refugee women's ability to meet their basic needs and caused problems with their psychological and social well-being.

The study also explored how identity issues intersect with the adaptation experiences of the participants. Participant, refugee women described they faced at least two identity-related challenges: misrecognition (in the form of unrecognized identity papers) and mistreatment (in the form of increase in the price of goods and services owing to their collective identity). Refugee women were restricted in terms of accessing employment and important services as a result of these challenges. Lack of awareness about refugee rights and entitlements among some staff of organizations and local community members contributed to their identity-related challenges.

The major linguistic and socio-cultural challenges that refugee women faced included language problems, cultural differences, social isolation, obstacles to education, and uncooperative police. These challenges negatively affected refugee women's social interaction with the local community, job opportunities, income, and development on both a personal and professional level. The participants underscored the adverse influence of their lack of social interaction on their sense of belonging.

Participants in this study also expressed their repeated encounters with sexual harassment. These adverse experiences were triggered by men on the street, in hospitals, and at work. Sexual harassment was exacerbated by their refugee status and gender. In general, the challenges that Yemeni refugee women faced in Addis Ababa had an enormous effect on their well-being.

Refugee women sought support from both formal and informal sources. Refugee women's formal support sources including UNHCR, JRS, and EOC-DICAC played a crucial role in their well-being. Specifically, UNHCR's monthly financial support was crucial for refugee women's survival because it subsidized their house rent. The material support, such as food rations and bedding, hygienic items, and milk powder provided by JRS and EOC-DICAC, was

also important for refugee women because it covered some of the costs that they would incur for buying these materials. However, the provision of such items was infrequent and inadequate.

Skills training provided by JRS and EOC-DICAC helped refugee women improve and diversify their skill sets. Nevertheless, they were not applying their skills to the fields of study for which they had received training. This resulted from the inability to obtain a business license, their refugee status, and a lack of startup capital. The medical and educational allowances provided by EOC-DICAC also covered the expense of refugee women's health services and their children's educational materials. However, the instrumental support provided by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations did not meet refugee women's expectations.

In their attempt to access support from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, refugee women faced many barriers, including language barriers, a lack of knowledge about the existing support packages, high transportation costs, mistreatment and bias from support providers, unmet survival needs, childcare responsibility, failure to give timely responses by support providers, and community leaders' unfair recruitment to the support provided by humanitarian organizations. These barriers hurt both refugee women's short- and long-term lives, diminished their financial capacity, and made them incur unnecessary expenses.

Informal support sources like family, friends, and independent sponsors played a vital role in the promotion of refugee women's well-being. The instrumental support provided by family, friends, and independent sponsors helped refugee women cope with some of their economic challenges.

The emotional support provided by family members and friends from the same ethnic community helped refugee women ease their trouble adjusting. Family members and friends from ethnically similar communities were important sources of informational support for refugee

women, which filled their information gaps about the new social milieu. However, the lack of social relationships and the limited number of family and friends made it difficult for refugee women to get adequate support from informal support sources in Addis Ababa. In general, informal support sources fill in the gaps left by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations.

Refugee women used a variety of strategies to cope with adaptation challenges in the face of social support deficit. This signified that refugee women actively overcame adaptation challenges rather than reacting passively to them. Refugee women's coping strategies varied depending on the kinds of challenges they faced. No coping strategy worked uniformly for all of the challenges faced by refugee women. Some coping strategies assisted refugee women in overcoming a particular aspect of the issue. However, the same strategies that worked for some aspects can simultaneously harm other aspects in complex interrelationships.

Refugee women employed different coping strategies to cope with economic challenges, such as engaging in income-generating activities, selling possessions, marrying local men, prioritizing spending, renting houses in Addis Ababa's outskirts, living in a small rental house, and sharing a room with family members. The income-generating activities offered refugee women a purpose in life and helped them reconstruct their lives in addition to providing financial benefits.

Refugee women also used various coping strategies to cope with identity-related challenges, like sending Ethiopian nationals to the shop, not wearing their Abaya while shopping, using essential words from the local language, and using an avoidance strategy. These coping strategies helped refugee women in the short term.

To cope with linguistic and socio-cultural challenges, refugee women employed strategies such as participating in social gatherings, using language learning and rehearsal

strategies, and using virtual communication tools. Using these coping strategies helped refugee women deal with language barriers, social isolation, and cultural variations. Moreover, refugee women used religious belief, cognitive reappraisal, and venting emotions as strategies to deal with several adaptation challenges they faced in Addis Ababa.

## **8.2. Implications**

The general and social work implications are described below.

### **8.2.1. General Implications**

The study's findings have implications for the government, refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, local community members, and other concerned bodies. They are presented as follows.

Limited job opportunities and income impact refugee women's economic well-being. The government and refugee-serving humanitarian organizations need to increase job opportunities for refugee women by providing job training and giving access to small business loans. Given the increasing living costs in Addis and the inflation in the economy, UNHCR needs to consider the issue of the sufficiency and adequacy of financial support for refugees and develop procedures that could factor in these contextual changes in its programming. Specifically, UNHCR needs to provide sufficient financial support to refugee women to enable them to rent houses that are secure, stable, and within their price range. Additionally, the government needs to draft legislation to protect tenants (refugee women) from discrimination based on the color of their skin and their status as refugees.

The lack of recognition of refugee identity cards among some organizations and local community members is associated with the unawareness of refugee rights and entitlements. This created barriers for refugee women to access essential goods and services. The government needs

to increase awareness of refugees' rights and entitlements among employees at all levels and members of the local community using different tools, such as mainstream media and social media. Sensitizing practices like this will increase refugee women's acceptance and lessen their discrimination. Health service providers need to be encouraged to continue giving refugee women health services without requiring them to show their identity cards.

Charging higher prices by some sellers and service provider organizations created problems for refugee women in getting essential goods and services. Awareness-raising and sensitizing programs targeting local community members need to be designed and implemented to end discriminatory practices. The government and other stakeholders also need to educate refugee women about how to report unfair price increment practices to the nearby Woreda office.

The language difficulty affected refugee women's social and economic integration. The language barrier was also one of the obstacles preventing refugee women from accessing education. There is a necessity for designing local language learning programs for refugee women. Refugee-serving humanitarians should prioritize teaching refugee women the local language rather than the English language.

Humanitarian organizations working with refugees must engage them in income-generating activities that strengthen their financial capabilities, as limited income is the other barrier to access education for refugee women. Bullying and discrimination in schools, together with government schools' unwillingness to accept them, were barriers to education for refugee children. Hence, the government and social workers need to raise awareness among schools about the rights of refugees to education and prevent discriminatory practices in schools. In general, some of the challenges that refugee women faced occurred during their initial periods.

The government and humanitarian organizations need to design and provide comprehensive early support for refugee women.

From a legal and policy perspective, the study findings implicate that the government and other agencies in contact with refugees have not taken seriously their responsibility to protect as per the international conventions and national policy statements. In addition to reminding state actors to observe their obligations, this finding implies the need for policy advocacy efforts by civil society and social workers.

Moreover, it could be crucial for refugee-serving humanitarian organizations and other concerned bodies to develop better integration programs, including providing cultural orientation training and encouraging refugee women to participate in cultural programs to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation and to narrow cultural differences. The government and humanitarian organizations need to educate the local community about sexual harassment and assist refugee women in obtaining legal and psychosocial support.

The support that refugee women received from refugee-serving humanitarian organizations focused on their physical needs. Since refugee women faced so many challenges that affected their mental well-being, refugee-serving humanitarian organizations should design psychosocial interventions for refugee women. Moreover, to enhance refugee women's well-being, support provided by humanitarian organizations should be more sustainable and adequate. Particularly, UNHCR should register children over the age of 18 as adults and assist similar to that given to the head of a family.

Language was not only the major barrier to refugee women's daily lives but also to receiving support from humanitarian organizations. To help refugee women overcome language barriers, humanitarian organizations need to offer them language classes in both local and

English languages. In the meantime, it is necessary to assign sufficient interpreters to provide refugee women with interpretation services.

Information about the existing support packages offered by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations was not available for refugee women. Refugee-serving humanitarian organizations need to do awareness-raising campaigns using refugee women's mother tongue to publicize their support programs.

Refugee women encountered high transportation costs while they were trying to access material support. To lessen the financial burden of refugee women, humanitarian organizations must either provide adequate material support in advance or transfer the money required to buy the material via bank. Moreover, humanitarian organizations have to give refugee women a sufficient transportation allowance that takes into consideration the current cost of transportation.

Refugee women faced mistreatment and bias by those who were supposed to protect and cater to them. Humanitarian organizations need to provide their employees with sensitization training that emphasizes cultural sensitivity, promoting empathic understanding, how to be responsive, how to approach refugees equally and fairly, and the importance of countering unfriendly treatment and biased attitudes. In addition, the timely responsiveness of support providers to refugee women's needs should be improved, which will help to overcome delays in support delivery.

In addition to focusing on the long-term goals of refugee women, humanitarian organizations' programs should be directed toward enhancing their current economic situation by providing for their basic needs. The daycare service provided by a humanitarian organization, though commendable, was not adequate. It is therefore necessary to offer appropriate childcare services that consider refugee women's needs.

Community leaders unfairly recruited refugee women for the support provided by humanitarian organizations. Hence, the responsibility of recruiting the most vulnerable should be placed on the humanitarian organization. Community leaders should also be open and honest with refugee women regarding their recruitment criteria. As representatives of the Yemeni refugee community, community leaders need to ask refugee women what they are lacking. They need to go door to door looking for needy Yemenis and determining who is the most vulnerable refugee in need of assistance. Moreover, Social workers may be assigned to work with community leaders to ensure the fairness of recurrence processes and to professionally handle grievances related to eligibility.

Refugee-serving organizations and the government (RRS) may consider strengthen refugee women's existing informal social networks through community and peer engagement programs since these networks provide them with informational, emotional, and instrumental support. Refugee-serving humanitarian organizations like UNHCR, JRS, and EOC-DICAC need to create a socialization (cultural exchange) program that brings together refugee women, other refugee communities, and the local community members. This will allow for the exchange of support and increase opportunities for social cohesion.

Refugee women expressed gratitude for the instrumental support they got from informal support sources, but that the amount of this support was inadequate. In the short term, the government and refugee-serving humanitarian organizations must work together to provide refugee women with sufficient support that meets their specific needs. They need to help refugee women obtain jobs in the long run. It is also the responsibility of government and humanitarian organizations to educate the local community about ways in which they can support refugee women.

Refugee women sought information from friends and family about the support programs offered by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. However, humanitarian organizations must advertise their support in the mother tongue of refugee women. Humanitarian organizations also need to cooperate with Yemeni community leaders to use their networks to tell refugee women about available support programs.

The refugee women's coping strategies had the nature of easing challenges for only a short period. Finding a long-term solution for refugee women requires action from RRS, refugee-serving humanitarian organizations, and other concerned bodies. The government and other concerned bodies need to empower refugee women by helping to establish alternative income-generating activities. The women in this study did not have a business license as they were refugees. The government (RRS) needs to allow refugee women to be issued Tin numbers and business licenses that would enhance their ability to open their businesses, sell their goods to supermarkets, and thus earn the money needed to support themselves.

The government also needs to provide refugee women with a place to work where they can freely work and earn an income. Social work practitioners need to teach refugee women to adopt positive coping strategies like cognitive reappraisal, which provide them with the strength to deal with multiple adversaries. This will allow refugee women to continue employing their strengths or assets and increase their ability to overcome adaptation challenges. Furthermore, the government should provide the supports needed to allow the refugee women to successfully integrate into Ethiopian society. Taking such actions may enable refugee women to thrive rather than just survive.

## **8.2.2. Social Work Implications**

The study has implications for social work in at least four primary domains.

### **8.2.2.1. Implications for Education**

The findings of the study have implications for social work education. To complete their refugee-related courses (e.g., migration, refugee and social work practice), undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in social work programs at Ethiopia's several universities need to work with refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. By doing in field placement or attachment in these settings, students are better able to recognize the support needs of refugee women, understand the barriers that stand in the way of receiving social support, and develop strategies for intervention that effectively meet those needs.

The study's findings assist social work teachers in educating their students on the types and sources of social support available to refugee women in Addis Ababa, as well as the challenges they face in doing so. Social work teachers need to encourage students to develop seminars on a range of refugee social support issues.

In addition, the school of social work need to collaborate with migration centers and humanitarian organizations working with refugees in carrying out community outreach and research on topics related to refugee social support. For instance, the Addis Ababa University School of Social Work and the Research Chair for Forced Displacement and Migration Studies could collaborate. The research chair could provide research grants for undergraduate and postgraduate students who conduct research on refugee issues, such as social support. Additionally, the research chair can provide students with mentoring and capacity-building workshops in the area of refugee support.

### **8.2.2.2. Implications for Practice**

The study's findings have social work practice implications. Social workers need to assist refugee women in reconstructing their support systems. According to the study's findings, refugee women have a variety of support needs, which can be met by collaborating with other professionals. To address the support needs of refugee women, social workers need to engage with psychologists, psychiatrists, and other specialists.

The findings of the study also showed that refugee women's difficulties with psychological and social well-being are linked to their encountering a number of challenges adjusting to life in Addis Ababa. Therefore, social workers need to provide psychosocial support services to refugee women. Moreover, the study's findings indicated that refugee women employed a variety of coping strategies to deal with adversities. This showed that refugee women are active agents in their lives. Social workers need to recognize and capitalize on the strengths of refugee women.

### **8.2.2.3. Implications for Policy**

The findings of the study have implications for refugee policy. The findings of the study underscore the importance of providing refugee women language classes in both local and English languages, assigning sufficient interpreters, creating awareness-raising campaigns using refugee women's mother tongue, providing sensitization training, and strengthening refugee women's existing informal social networks. Therefore, knowledge regarding these issues could assist policymakers in addressing the support needs of refugee women.

Additionally, the study's findings indicated that refugee women faced challenges like unrecognized identity papers, restricted mobility, being excluded from government-subsided

basic services, and the like. Hence, understanding this could help policymakers design a refugee policy that promotes social justice and breaks down obstacles to social inclusion.

The study's findings showed that there are problems with the implementation of the new refugee proclamation. Since implementation is one of the components of policy, the study provides policymakers with specific information regarding limitations in the areas of refugee social support during its implementation.

#### **8.2.2.4. Implications for Research**

The study's findings have implications for further research in the field of social work and other disciplines. As a descriptive phenomenology emphasizing the essence and structure of social support experiences, this study examined refugee social support only through the lens of refugee women. While relevant lessons have been learned in identifying the structures of this experience, there is still a need for future research to also explore the perspectives of support providers and policymakers.

Only the social support experiences of one gender group (women) and one refugee community (Yemeni) are included in my study. Future research that needs to be taken into account may add to our understanding through studies of refugees from different communities and both gender groups. This facilitates drawing comparisons among various refugee populations.

In line with the methodological tents of descriptive phenomenological inquiry, I relied on semi-structured interviews to collect the phenomenological data to explore refugee women's social support experiences. Given the paucity of research on the subject, future studies may employ other data collection methods, such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews, to triangulate the findings. Additionally, researchers may study the issue of refugee

social support using case studies and grounded study methodologies with the intent of enriching and diversifying our understanding.

This study highlighted that the sources and types of social support refugee women receive may not be exhaustive, which indicates a need for additional research. Further research needs to explore refugee women's conceptualization of social support in the context of Addis Ababa, the changes in refugees' social support needs over time, and the impact of perceived social support on refugee wellbeing.

Furthermore, future studies need to focus on the provision of support by refugee women since they are not always recipients of support. Evaluation of support programs also needs to be considered in future studies since the issue of refugee social support is not only an academic but also a practical matter.

Here are some suggested research questions for future studies.

- ✓ How do refugee women conceptualize social support?
- ✓ How do refugee women build social support networks in Addis Ababa?
- ✓ How do refugee women provide support to others?
- ✓ How do refugee women social support needs change over time?
- ✓ What is the impact of perceived social support on refugee women well-being?

In conclusion, there is a chance to improve refugee women's well-being through emphasizing social support. When given the required social support, refugee women will thrive, reconstruct their lives, contribute positively to both themselves and their host communities, and enhance the environment in which they live.

### **8.3. Limitations of the Study**

The study was not free from limitations. First, I relied on the data collected through semi-structured interviews. I did not triangulate the findings using other data collection instruments, like focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Nonetheless, I carefully chose participants for the semi-structured interview to guarantee that I captured refugee women's social support experiences. Second, I used data collected solely from refugee women. I did not conduct semi-structured interviews with support providers and policymakers to ask about the issue of refugee social support.

Third, the type of support provided by formal and informal support sources may not be limited to the support included in this study. I relied on the reports of refugee women about the support they received. Fourth and the last limitation is that, as I am not an Arabic speaker, some information may have been lost during translation. To minimize this limitation, I recruited a bilingual interviewer who was fluent in both English and Arabic. I provided her with a one-day orientation. One of the main issues with the orientation was how to appropriately translate the transcript.

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## Annex I

### Socio-demographic characteristics of study participants

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of study participants

Pseudonym of participants	Age	Marital status	Highest level of education attained	Length of stay in Addis Ababa	Number of children
Badia	44 years	Single	MA degree	3 & half years	1 foster child
Cally	57 years	Divorced	Grade 10	8 years	1
Emani	37 years	Divorced	Grade 8	5 years	1
Fatim	31 years	Single	BA degree	9 years	-
Halima	34 years	Single	BA degree	4 years and five months	-
Iman	38 years	Married	Illiterate (can read and write)	6 years	3
Kalah	56 years	Widowed	Grade 12	7 years	4
Aisha	38 years	Divorced	Grade 12	7 years	3
Afina	33 years	Married	BSc	4 years	2
Leila	30 years	Single	BSc	6 years	-
Marya	40 years	Divorced	Grade 12	6 years	-
Nahir	60 years	Widowed	Grade 12	10 years	2
Abia	51 years	Married	Grade 11	8 years	4

## **Annex II**

### **Information sheet for participants (English version)**

#### **Title: Social Support Experiences of Yemeni Refugee Women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study**

Dear participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in a study about the social support experiences of refugee women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I hope that the findings will help develop an understanding of refugee social support within the Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, context. You must understand the purpose of the research and the details of your participation before deciding to participate. Before consenting to participate in the study, please take the time to thoroughly read the following information and ask any questions you may have.

#### **What is the objective of the study?**

This study is designed to examine the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

#### **Who are the study participants?**

The study participants will be Yemeni refugee women aged 18 and above who have lived in Addis Ababa for at least one year and can communicate in Arabic.

#### **What will happen if you agree to take part?**

If you agree to participate in the study, you will take part in semi-structured interviews that will last between 1 to 2 hours. The semi-structured interviews inquire about adaptation challenges, social support experiences, and coping strategies to deal with adaptation challenges in the face of a social support deficit. I will audio-record the interviews with your permission. The interviews will be conducted at your preferred locations and times.

**What happens if I decided to withdraw?**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate but later change your mind, you can drop out of the study at any time without providing a reason. You could also stop the interview at any time, or refuse to respond to any items of the interview. Before November 5, 2022, you can also request that I withdraw any information you already provided for the study.

**Are there possible risks or harms associated with taking part in the study?**

Participating in this research will not incur any risks or negative effects. Nonetheless, given the phenomenon's emphasis on adaptation problems, social support experiences, and strategies for coping, there might be a very small chance of discomfort for you. You will be referred to the Addis Ababa University Guidance and Counseling Office counselor if you experience distress associated with the semi-structured interviews.

**Are there any benefits of taking part in the study?**

You will not benefit personally from participating in this study. However I hope that the data I collect will help to improve the social support provided to you and to design social support programs that enhance your wellbeing. Moreover, in appreciation for the time you spent with me and as compensation for your transportation, 200 ETB will be given to you.

**Will I be informed of the findings of the study?**

Once the study is completed, you will be informed of the findings by publishing them in reputable journals.

**Will taking part in this study will be kept confidential?**

Your identifiers are removed from the data. Pseudonyms will be used in place of any identifying information in the transcripts to represent the data in the monograph or articles. I'll keep the transcripts and the audio recordings on my personal computer with a secured password.

**Who do I contact if I have questions about the study?**

Please use the following contact information to contact the principal researcher at any time if you have any questions or need more information about the study.

Samuel Amare: Mobile number: 0913104487, email address: lesamueye@gmail.com

### Annex III ورقة معلومات المشاركين

**العنوان : تجارب الدعم الإجتماعي للنساء الأجانب اليمنيات في اديس ابابا – اثيوبيا .  
دراسة وصفية ظاهرية .**

عزيزي المشارك

اود ان ادعوك للمشاركة في دراسة حول تجارب الدعم الإجتماعي للنساء الاجنات في اديس ابابا- اثيوبيا , وانا على امل ان تساعد النتائج في تطوير فهم دعم الإجتماعي للأجنيين في سياق اديس ابابا- اثيوبيا ويجب ان نفهموا الغرض من بحث والتفاصيل من مشاركتكم قبل ان تقرر المشاركة قبل الموافقة على المشاركة في الدراسة, يرجى تخصيص الوقت للقراءة المعلومات التالية بدقة وطرح أي اسئلة الذي قد تكون لديكم.

**ما هو الهدف من الدراسة ؟**

صُممت هذه الدراسة لدراسة تجارب الدعم الإجتماعي للنساء اللاجنات اليمنيات في اديس ابابا – اثيوبيا سيكونوا المشاركون في الدراسة من اللاجنات اليمنيات اللواتي يبلغن من العمر 18 عامًا فما فوق والذين عاشوا في اديس ابابا لمدة عام على الأقل ويمكنهم التواصل باللغة العربية .

**ماذا سيحدث إذا وافقت على المشاركة ؟**

إذا وافقت على المشاركة في الدراسة فسوف تشارك في المقابلات شبه منظمة تستمر مابين ساعة إلى ساعتين . تستفسر المقابلات شبه المنظمة عن تحديات التكيف , وتجارب الدعم الإجتماعي واستراتيجيات التكيف للتعامل مع التحديات التكيف في مواجهات عجز الدعم الإجتماعي. سأقوم بتسجيل المقابلات صوتيا بعد إنك. وسيتم إجراء المقابلات في المواقع والأوقات المفضلة لديك.

**ماذا يحدث إذا قررت الانسحاب ؟**

ان المشاركة في هذه الدراسة طوعياً تكاملاً , إذا اخترت المشاركة ولكن غيرت رأيك لاحقاً فيمكنك ترك الدراسة في اي وقت ممكن دون تقديس اي اسباب , ويمكنك أيضاً إيقاف المقابلة في اي وقت , او رفض على اي من بنوب المقابلة قبل تاريخ 5 نوفمبر 2022 م , يمكنك ايضاً ان تطلبني مني سحب اي معلومات قدمتها بال فعل للدراسة.

**هل هناك مخاطر أو أضرار محتملة مرتبطة بالمشاركة في الدراسة ؟**

لن ترتب على المشاركة في هذا البحث أي مخاطر أو اثار سلبية , ومع ذلك ونظراً لتركيز الظاهرة على المشكلات التكيف , وتجارب دعم الإجتماعي و استراتيجيات التكيف قد تكون هناك فرصة ضئيلة جداً لشعورك بعدم الراحة, وسيتم تحويلك إلى مستشار مكتب التوجيه والإرشاد بجامعة اديس ابابا , وإذا شعرتي بالضيق المرتبط بالمقابلات شبه منظمة.

**هل هناك اي فوائد للمشاركة في الدراسة ؟**

لن تستفيد اي شخصياً من المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ومع ذلك انا مع الأمل تساعد البيانات التي أجمعها في تحسين الدعم الإجتماعي المقدم لكي وتصميم برامج الدعم الإجتماعي التي تعزز رفاهيتك, وعلاوة على ذلك تقديراً للوقت الذي قضيتيهو معي وكتعويض عن المواصلات سيتم منحك 200 بر أثيوبي.

**هل سيتم الإغ بنتائج الدراسة ؟**

بمجرد الإنتهاء من الدراسة سيتم إعلامك بالنتائج من خلال نشرها في المجالات ذات السمعة الطيبة .

**هل سيتم الحفاظ على سرية المشاركة في هذه الدراسة؟**

تتم إزالة معرفتيك من البيانات سيتم امساء المستعارة بدلاً من اي معلومات تعريفية في النصوص لتمثيل البيانات الموجودة في أو المقابلات. وسأحتفظ بالنصوص والتسجيلات الصوتية على جهاز الكمبيوتر الشخصي الخاص بي بكلمة مرور آمنة .

**بمن ممكن اقوم بإلتصال إذا كانت لدي اسئلة حول الدراسة؟**

يرجى استخدام معلومات الأتصالات التالية للأتصال بالبحث الرئيسي في اي وقت وإذا كانت لديكي أي اسئلة أو كنتي بحاجة إلى مزيد من المعلومات حول الدراسة  
يرجى التواصل مع :

ساموئيل أماري , رقم الهاتف المحمول : 091314487 , البريد الإلكتروني : [lesaamuelye@gmail.com](mailto:lesaamuelye@gmail.com)

## Annex IV

### Certificate of Protocol Approval



*Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers And Anthropologists*  
ኢትዮጵያን ሶሻይቲ ኦፍ ሶሲዮሎጂስትስ ሶሻል ወርከርስ ኤንድ አንትሮፖሎጂስትስ

Ref.No. ESSSWA/L/AA/094/2022

Date: 11 March 2022

ESSSWA's Institutional Review Board (ESSSWA's-IRB)

#### Certificate of Protocol Approval

ESSSWA'S IRB meeting No. IRB/ESSSWA/007/2022

To: Samuel Amare, Principal Investigator

From: Melese Getu (PhD), Chairperson, Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Protocol Title:	<b>Refugee women from war-affected Middle East Countries in Addis Ababa and their experiences of social support: A phenomenological study</b>
Protocol Number	010/2022
Principal Investigator	Samuel Amare
Institute	UNHCR, JRS, EOC-DICAC
Study site/s	Addis Ababa
Decision	The Institutional Review Board of ESSSWA has approved the above mentioned research protocol which involves human study participants.
Date of final approval issued	11 March 2022
Expiration date of this approval certificate	10 March 2023

#### Obligations of the PI

1. Should comply with the standard international and national scientific and ethical guidelines.
2. All amendments and changes made in the protocol and consent forms must have prior IRB approval.
3. The PI should report all serious and/or unexpected side effects or unanticipated problems (SAE) in writing within 10 days to ESSSWA's IRB by email ([melese88@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:melese88@yahoo.co.uk)) and/or [hmulugeta1977@gmail.com](mailto:hmulugeta1977@gmail.com)) or in person.



Tel: +251-11-1223450, Tele, +251-11-1260903, Fax: +251-11-1228214, Email: [essswa@gmail.com](mailto:essswa@gmail.com), Web: [www.essswa.org](http://www.essswa.org), P.O.Box 31130  
Address: 4 Kilo area, Holy Trinity Theology College, 5th Floor Office No. 502, Opposite AAU Arat Killo Campus, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

4. Brief progress report of the study should be given to the IRB when the data collection activity is completed

5. A hard copy of the final report of the study should be given to the IRB.

**Note:** If this project continues after the expiry date of approval indicated above, then it must be renewed as specified by the IRB guidelines. A renewal application consists of a brief report which summarized the results obtained during the past period and a short statement of the research plan for the coming year.

Melese Getu (PhD)

Chairperson, IRB

Sig: 

Date: 11 March 2022



**CC:** ESSWA's IRB Secretary

Name: Me

Chairperson, IRB

**Annex V**

**Confidentiality Agreement with the Interviewer (English version)**

**Title: Social Support Experiences of Yemeni Refugee Women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study**

This agreement is developed for the person who gets hired to carry out the interviews, transcribe, and translate.

I \_\_\_\_\_ has been hired as an interviewer, transcriber and translator. I agree to:

1. To keep the audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated material private by not disclosing it to anybody outside the researcher.
2. To return the researcher the audio recordings, transcribed, and translated data when I have finished the work.
3. After I finish my work and give the researcher the audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated data, I will delete it
4. The data that I have audio recorded, transcribed, and translated is not mine to use.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Annex VI

### اتفاقية السرية مع القائم مع الإجراء المقابلة.

العنوان : تجارب الدعم الإجتماعي للنساء الألاجنات اليمنيات في اديس ابابا – اثيوبيا, دراسة دراسة وهمية وصفية .

تم تطوير هذه الإتفاقية للشخص الذي يتم تعيينه الإجراء المقابلات وتدوينها وترجمتها أنا ..... قد استمعت على المقابلات, وتم تعيين كمحاور وناسخ, ووافق على :  
1 – الحفاظ على خصوصية المواد الصوتية المسجلة والمكتوبة والمترجمة بعدم والكشف عنها لأي شخص خارج البحث.

2 – ان يعيد للباحث التسجيلات الصوتية والبيانات المكتوبة والمترجمة عند إنتهاء العمل.

3 – بعد ان انتهى من عملي وأعطي الباحث البيانات الصوتية والمسجلة والمترجمة سأقوم بحذفها.

4 – البيانات التي قمت بتسجيلها صوتيًا ونسخها وترجمتها ليست ملكًا لي للأستخدام.

.....  
التاريخ

.....  
التوقيع

.....  
اسم الباحث

.....  
التوقيع

.....  
التاريخ

## Annex VII

### Semi-structured Interview Guide for Refugee Women (English version)

Participant's Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Start time: \_\_\_\_\_ End time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section one: Background information

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
  - ✓ About your age, marital status, and highest level of education?
  - ✓ How long have you been living in Addis Ababa?
  - ✓ Do you have children that are living with you now? If yes, how many?
  - ✓ How did you come to Ethiopia?
  - ✓ Why did you choose to come to Ethiopia?
  - ✓ How did you feel when you first came to Addis Ababa?
  - ✓ Where did you go when you first came to Addis Ababa?
  - ✓ When you first came to Addis Ababa, how did you get information about registration issues?
  - ✓ Can you tell me more about your registration and refugee status determination process?

#### Section Two: Adaptation Challenges

2. Have you faced any adaptation challenges while you try to establish a new life in Addis Ababa? If your answer is yes,

- ✓ What adaptation challenges did you face?
- ✓ How does each adaptation challenge affect your daily life and well-being?

### **Section three: Social support experiences**

3. Can you tell me about your experiences with social support?

- Sources and types of social support
  - ✓ Can you tell me about your sources of support?
  - ✓ Can you describe the specific types of social support that are available to you?
  - ✓ When you first came to Addis Ababa, how did you get information about the available social support?
  - ✓ How easy or hard was it to get information about the available social support?
- Functions of refugee women's support systems
  - ✓ How important is the type of support you get from sources of support in smoothing the adaptation process for you or enhancing your well-being?
  - ✓ Tell me the contribution of each support to your well-being.
  - ✓ How satisfied are you with the social support you receive from each source of support?
- Expectation vs. reality
  - ✓ When you came to Addis Ababa, what type of support did you expect to receive from each source of support?
  - ✓ Have you received what you expected? If not, could you elaborate on it?
  - ✓ Can you describe what you feel when you do not get the support you expect or when the support is inadequate, inaccessible, or unavailable?

- Barriers to accessing social support
  - ✓ Have you faced any difficulty accessing some social support? If yes,
    - What barriers do you face to accessing social support?
    - Can you describe how these barriers have affected your well-being?
- Meanings attached to being supported
  - ✓ Can you tell me the meanings you attach to your experiences of receiving support from each source of support?

#### **Section Four: Coping Strategies**

4. Can you describe how you deal with each adaptation challenge in the face of a social support deficit?
  - ✓ How does each coping strategy help you enhance your well-being?
5. What can be done to better meet your support needs, gain access to social support, and enhance your well-being?
6. If you are advising someone moving to Addis Ababa, what suggestions will you give them on how to get the social support they need?
7. Additional thoughts or points, if any

Thank you!

## Annex VIII

دليل المقابلة سبه المنظمة للنساء للاجنات

رمز المشاركة .....

تاريخ المقابلة .....

وقت البدء ..... , وقت الإنتهاء .....

### القسم الأول : معاومات اساسية

1- هل يمكن ان تخبريني قليلاً عن نفسك ؟

- ✓ عن عمريك وحالتك الإجتماعية وأعلى مستوى التعليمي ؟
- ✓ منذ متي وانتي تعيشي في أديس ابابا ؟
- ✓ هل لديك اطفال يعيشون معكي الآن ؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم , كم العدد ؟
- ✓ كيف اتيتي إلى اثيوبيا ؟
- ✓ لماذا اخترتي التقدم إلى اثيوبيا ؟
- ✓ كيف كان شعورك عند ما اتيتي إلى اديس ابابا لأول مرة ؟
- ✓ اين ذهبتي عندما اتيتي إلى اديس ابابا لأول مرة ؟
- ✓ عندما اتيتي إلى اديس ابابا لأول مرة كيف حصلتي على معلومات عنها؟
- ✓ هل يمكنك ان تخبريني المزيد عن عملية التسجيل وتحديد وضع ةتحديد وضع اللاجئ ومشاكل التسجيل ؟

### القسم الثاني : تحديات التكيف

2- هل واجهتي اي تحديات في التكيف اثناء محاولتك تأسيس حياة جديدة في اديس ابابا ؟ إذا كانت الإجابة نعم

- ✓ ما هي تحديات التكيف التي واجهتها ؟
- ✓ كيف يؤثر كل التحدي من تحديات التكيف على حياتك اليومية ورفاهيتك ؟

### القسم الثالث : تجارب الدعم الإجتماعي –

3- هل يمكنك ان تخبريني عن تجاربك مع الدعم الإجتماعي

- مصادر وأنواع الدعم الإجتماعي
  - ✓ هل يمكنك أن تخبريني عن مصادر الدعم الخاص بك؟
  - ✓ هل يمكنك وصف أنواع الدعم الإجتماعي المحددة المتوفرة لك؟
  - ✓ عند ما اتيتي إلى اديس ابابا لأول مرة كيف حصلتي على معلومات حول الدعم الإجتماعي المتاح ؟
  - ✓ ما مدى سهولة أو صعوبة الحصول على معلومات الإجتماعي المتاح ؟
- وظائف أنظمة دعم النساء للاجنات السبل
  - ✓ ما مدى اهمية نوع الدعم الذي تحصل عليها من مصادر الدعم في تسهيل عملية التكيف بالنسبة لك؟ أو تعزيز رفاهيتك .
  - ✓ اخبريني عن مساهمة كل الدعم في رفاهيتك
  - ✓ ما مضى رضاكي عن الدعم الإجتماعي الذي تتلقيا من كل مصدر دعم
- التوقع مقابل الواقع.
  - ✓ عند ما اتيتي إلى اديس ابابا ما نوع الدعم الذي كنتي تتوقعي للحصول عليه من كل مصدر دعم ؟
  - ✓ هل حصلت على ما كنتي تتوقعيه ؟ إذا لم يكن الأمر كذلك هل يمكنك التوضيح ذلك
  - ✓ هل يمكنك وصف ما تشعر به عند ما لا تحصل على الدعم الذي تتوقعيه أو عندما يكون الدعم غير مافي أو لا يمكن الوصول إليه أو غير متوفر ؟
- معوقات الوصول إلى الدعم الإجتماعي
  - ✓ هل واجهتي اي صعوبة في الوصول إلى بعض الدعم الإجتماعي ؟ إذا نعم
  - ما هي العوائق التي تواجهها في الحصول على دعم الإجتماعي ؟

○ هل يمكنك وصف كيف أثرت هذه العوائق على صحتك؟

● المعاني المرتبطة بالدعم

✓ هل يمكنك إخبار بالمعاني التي تعلقها على تجاربك في تلقي الدعم من كل مصدر دعم؟

القسم الرابع – استراتيجيات المواجهات

4- هل يمكنك وصف كيفية تعاملك مع كل التحدي من تحديات التكيف في ملوآجات أحد التحديات الاجتماعية لعجز الدعم؟

✓ كيف تساعد كل استراتيجية مواجهة على تعزيز فاهميتك؟

5- ما الذي يمكن فعله لتلبية احتياجات الدعم الخاصة بك بشكل افضل, والحصول على الدعم الاجتماعي وتعزيز رفاهيتك؟

6- إذا كانت التصريح شخصًا ينتقل إلى اديس ابابا, فما هي الإقتراحات التي ستقدمها له حول كيفية الحصول على الدعم الاجتماعي الذي يحتاجه؟

7- أفكار أو نقط إضافية إن وجدت

شكرًا لكي .