

**Full Length Research Paper****Breaking the Silence: Divulging Brokers and Parents' Related Factors for the Vulnerability of Female Domestic Workers in Hossana Town, Ethiopia**

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**Article Info****Abstract****Article History**

Received: 23 June 2022

Accepted: 30 Dec 2022

**Keywords:**

Brokers, Female Domestic Workers, Parents, Vulnerability

*This study aimed to investigate the influence of brokers and parents on the vulnerability of female domestic workers. A multi-method research approach with an embedded design was used. Convenience sampling was employed as official records of domestic workers were not available in the study area. A total of 130 respondents participated in structured questionnaires, and 28 female domestic workers took part in interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that both licensed and unlicensed brokers were the primary perpetrators of various forms of violence, including sexual, psychological, and economic violence against the female domestic workers. Licensed brokers and their assistants, who were supposed to protect the rights of customers, were found to create an "unsafe and insecure" environment for migrant female domestic workers. Additionally, licensed brokers were involved in recruiting female domestic workers for involvement in sex work. Parents played an active role in the employment process by communicating with brokers and employers. They also collected their daughters' monthly salaries and lobbied for them to leave their jobs. To address these issues, comprehensive actions should be taken, including providing training on rights for employers, employees, and brokers in collaboration with labor and social affairs departments, women and social affairs organizations, and the police. Efforts should be made to raise awareness in the community, and financial support from donors is necessary to address this problem effectively.*



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Concept of Domestic work

Domestic work refers to a work performed in or for a household or households; this includes home chores like cleaning the house, cooking, taking care of the children, elders, and sick members of the employer, gardening, washing and ironing, and others (ILO 2013:3-7, Budrich 2018:9-28). Millions of men and women around the world work as domestic workers which is one of the oldest and most significant occupation. It constitutes a large part of the workforce, especially in developing countries, and the number is increasing in the industrialized world (ILO, 2013:67-101). The ILO estimates that there are almost 53 million domestic workers worldwide and that both males and females over the age of 15 make up this group (ILO, 2013:80). In 2050, the working-age population will expand by 40 percent, and trade openness will continue to develop, especially in service occupations.

Concerning the classification, domestic workers are classified into two based on their living situation, and time they spent on their duties (Rani 2018:577-583). The first is a full-time person who is engaged only in domestic work and stays within the home of the employer with the employer, may be residing in the household of the employer ("live-in worker"). The second is part-time work; unlike full time work, part-time work does not stay with the employers, but comes and performs the activities that are expected in the fixed time frame. It is also called a "live-out worker". Regarding the wage, ILO declared that all domestic workers are categorized as wage workers. According to Punjab (2014:125), wage worker means a person

employed for remuneration as an unorganized non-agricultural worker, directly by an employer or through any agency or contractor, whether exclusively for one employer or more employers, whether in cash and/or in kind.

Regarding their contribution to the global labor market, undoubtedly, they are playing a crucial role in the advancement of the economy (Rinaldi and Salerno 2020: 1467). In addition, the massive incorporation of women in the labor force, the aging of societies, the rise of work, and the frequent lack or inadequacy of policy measures to facilitate the reconciliation of family life and work underpin this trend (Phillipson, 2019:1-34).

### 1.2. Alleyways and Intermediaries To Domestic Work

Intermediaries are individuals (brokers, friends, parents, relatives and other) who facilitate conditions to contact employee and employers for their mutual benefits (Mulgeta and Makonnen 2017: 1-15). Brokers provide that service and are compensated in various ways, either through commissions, fees, or through being paid by the exchange itself (Chau and Schwiter 2021). There are two types of brokers "*delalas*" (Proclamation No 1156/19 2019). The first one is a licensed one; those agents get permission from the concerned government agent as a private employment agency (PEA). There are preconditions to getting this permission, such as working office, a place to stay for the domestic workers who are looking for employment, facilities, a contract agreement format, administration, and others. The second is unlicensed brokers. Unlike licensed brokers, unlicensed brokers are invisible from the lenses of the government, and they are considered as unregistered and illegal who put female

domestic workers in hazardous situation. The government assumes that those domestic workers who used the unlicensed brokers are more likely to be exposed to abuse and violence from perpetrators in any form. Because the brokers have no place to communicate, not contract agreement format to be signed, follow, or know the status of the workers, including their location and what they are doing. As stated by Kifle (2002), many domestic workers, particularly rural girls and children, start domestic service for other people in a very informal way (via unlicensed brokers), and they located in a short distance from their parents' house or a nearby rural town. Then, when they become very young and develop more physically, their parents, relatives, acquaintances, brokers or guardians initiate their trip to large towns or cities like Addis Ababa. According to household income diversification theory, parent initiate their children to the income generating jobs like domestic work.

### 1.3. Background

As defined by Svennson (2018:1-10), young female domestic workers are workers whose age is between 13-21 and who work in a household other than their own to perform domestic activities under the umbrella of domestic work, whether it is paid or unpaid. Nowadays, female domestic workers make up a large portion of the workforce, in the globe in general and in developing countries in particular and their number has been increasing even in the industrialized world (Kharas 2017:1-17).

Moreover, in developed countries, some companies are looking for workers, particularly migrants who cannot claim their rights due to their background and are employed in companies with lower costs, fewer benefits,

and deteriorating working conditions (Hathaway, 2021:73 and Fernandez, 2011:449). In the case of developing countries, where the mass unskilled working-age population is concentrated, the situation of domestic workers in general and migrant domestic workers in particular is worse relative to that of developed nations. In addition, unlike skilled labor, the scenario is rife with exploitation and oppression for unskilled labor, including female domestic workers, as there aren't many employment available for this group.

In the case of Ethiopia, the concept of domestic work and domestic workers is not new because has long history starting from the slave trade to current time (Mekonen, 2014:709 and Kifle, 2002:27-59). The way in which feudal families threatened their slaves during the monarchy period is largely carried over into how domestic workers were treated in Ethiopia. They were known as "*Gered*" and were expected to be available for about 24 hours, with no days off and no chances for professional or even personal growth. Currently, some community members exhibited their diminished sense of attitudinal value by referring to them as "*Gered*" in Amharic, a pejorative term meaning "servant" "*yebet serategn*" in Amharic (Berhe 2019, Kidist 2012:11). This is a reflection of unfair treatment for this social group, and it is an indication of a decent work deficit, not treating it like other groups.

Domestic employment and internal migration are strongly related; that is, internal migration rises periodically as a result of several circumstances, including the scarcity of rural land, the romantic attraction of city life, peer pressure, and the expansion of the need for domestic labor in cities (Adugna, Deshingkar, and Ayalew 2019). When potential migrants have plans to leave their village, one of their goals is to work as domestics in

the city.

Regarding their role, undoubtedly contribute significantly to both family life and the nation's economy in general. However, despite what they provide, significant number of the community undervalues and ignores them (Postmus et al., 2020:271, Mekonnen, 2014, Paul, 2014:63-71). This scenario is also discernible in Hossana by the community and employers where domestics are living. In addition, it is not surprising to see female domestic workers crying, being denied their monthly salary and/or materials by employers and brokers.

The intensity of the issue facing female domestic workers in the study area, Hossana town, is not the easiest thing to put into words. In specific term, they have been facing human rights violations like deprivation of the right to education, health, and work; physical abuse like hitting and scorching; sexual abuse like rape and unsafe abortion; economic abuse like being unable to be paid for similar occupations as men; and social abuse. Moreover, in the hospitals and health centers, it is obvious to see female domestic workers visiting for the purpose of abortion, and those who are pregnant but are not aware of abortion centers give birth and kill recklessly, abandoning a child somewhere in the periphery of the town. In spite of these troubles, no research has been conducted emphasizing this vulnerable group.

Previous studies have focused on the brokers' illegality in the process of employment, on child labor exploitation, returnees' experiences, violence against domestic workers in the Middle East, crime investigation reports, and other issues (Selamawit, 2013:131-51, Fernandez, 2010, Seblewongel, 2009, ILO, 2013, Population Council, 2021, Ansebo

2012). Little research has been done that specifically focuses on differentiating licensed and unlicensed brokers and how often brokers mistreat female domestic workers. In addition, parents' and guardians' complicity, whether intentional or not, in their daughters' exploitation and abuse contributed to their vulnerability.

Cognizant of these, this study aimed to explore the research questions such as: How did the domestic workers' parents contribute to the study population's vulnerability in the study area? How could brokers allow female domestic workers to be vulnerable in the study area?

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Description of the Study Area**

Hossana town is the administrative and trade center of the Hadiya zone, SNNPR. The town is located southwest of Addis Ababa, 232km away via the Alemgena-Butajira route, 280km via the Wolkite route, 305km via Zaway; and 168 km away from Hawassa (the capital of SNNPR) via Halaba-Angeca and 203km via Halaba. The absolute geographic location of Hosanna is 7<sup>0</sup> 331 North latitude and 37<sup>0</sup> 511 East longitude (Atlas of the World, 2009). The administrative area of Hossana town is 10,414.3 hectares, of which 4,585.48 hectares have a good master plan. (*Hossana Town Finance and Economic Development Office, 2011*). Hossana town is one of the 22 model towns on which due emphasis is given by the regional state (*Hossana Town Finance and Economic Development Office, 2011*).

There are two main reasons for the selection of the current study area. First, in the Hadiyya Zone, it is obvious to see a significant

number of female migrants in Hossana town because it is the center of the Haddiya Zone, where a lot of returnees prefer to settle. In addition, it is also a strategic area chosen as a temporary place for migrants (both men and women) waiting for flights to the Republic of South Africa and the Middle East, respectively. Therefore, prospective migrants like to migrate to Hossana town for some reason to engage in domestic work and/or look for daily labor work.

Second, the researcher is aware of the difficulties experienced by migrating women in the town since he lives there. Additionally, Hossana town is one of the oldest and outlying towns in the SNNPRS and has strong ties to the rural communities around it. As a result, many rural girls and women travel to Hossana town and stay with their urban intermediaries and connections in order to find employment as domestic workers.

## **2.2. Research Philosophy, Design and Method**

The research philosophy used in the study at hand was pragmatism in which combines both qualitative and quantitative approach with an embedded mixed design. Convenience sampling was used with the non-probability sampling method because domestic workers have no permanent residence. Further, their official registration records are not well organized and available from the concerned government organization in the study areas. Thus, all domestic workers who fulfilled the criteria and agreed to participate in the study were included.

## **2.3. Sample Size**

A total of 130 domestic workers participated in the study for the quantitative survey, and 28 respondents participated in the qualitative method. For data collec-

tion, three locations were chosen where female domestic workers could be found. 92, 29 and 9 domestic workers were recruited from private employment agencies (PEAs), evening classes at schools and water points, respectively.

## **2.4. Data Collection Tools and Data Source**

The quantitative data has been gathered using a structured questionnaire from sampled female domestic workers; and qualitative data was gathered via interview from key informants and selected female domestic workers. Key informant interviews (KII) took place to gather data from the concerned bodies of those who have direct and/or indirect linkages in the employment process. Hence, the 18 selected key informants were: 2 licensed private employment agencies, 2 unlicensed agencies, 1 LSA office, 1 WAD, 6 employers, 2 police officers, and 4 parents of employees (those who collected money from their daughters).

An in-depth interview was another tool used to collect data, in which five female domestic workers were selected to illuminate their experiences with the aforementioned issues (3 schools, and 2 from PEA). Their selection was based on the fixed criteria established by the researcher, such as work experience, the number of employers with whom they have worked, and their age, which should be 18 or above. Finally, five case studies have been conducted with migrant female domestic workers using the same criteria used for IDI respondents.

In conclusion, 158 individuals participated as respondents in the field when the data collection process was conducted. In terms of the data collection process, female enumerators gathered quantitative data first, followed by the collection of qualitative data.

## **2.5. Data Analysis**

The collected data was processed step by step using the survey method and the in-depth interview method. First, survey data was analyzed using SPSS software version 20 after cleaning and coding of the data. For the descriptive analysis, percentage, and graphic presentation, it was done in a clear way. The process of qualitative data analysis was done step by step, such as transcribing audio recorded data and categorizing themes accordingly.

### 2.6. Ethical Consideration

The study was conducted with close regard to the relevant standards of research ethics. Participants in the study were first informed of the study's aims prior to getting their informed permission to take part. Participants in the study were also offered promises of confidentiality, which were later put into action. The respondents were also given the choice to stop taking part in the study at any time. Lastly, those who consented to take part in the study signed a consent form that was created by the researcher.

Table 1. Distribution of the Study Population

Item		Frequency	Percent
<b>Educational Level</b>	Illiterate/no school attendance	12	9.2
	Grade 1-4	47	36.1
	Grade 5-8	54	41.5
	Grade 9-12	18	13.8
	Total	130	100.0
<b>Previous Residence</b>	Rural	122	93.8
	Urban	8	6.2
	Total	130	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	2	1.5
	Divorced	3	2.3
	Separated	1	0.8
	Single(never married)	124	95.4
	Total	130	100.0
<b>Year of Experience</b>	2-3 Years	58	44.6
	4-5 Years	59	45.4
	6-8 Years	13	10.0
	Total	130	100.0
<b>Age</b>	<14	13	10.0
	15-18	63	48.5
	19-24	54	41.5

in terms of their Profile

### 3. Result and Discussion

Female domestic workers are subjected to tremendous labor exploitation; as a result, they suffer from mental health problems due to insecurity, live in constant worry, and fear, experience stress, and grow hateful at the people who abused them specifically as well as the society as a whole.

#### 3.1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The majority (about 90%) of the respondents were aged between 15-24, while the remaining were children aged below 15 years old, i.e., below the minimum legal working age in the country. Regarding their educational status, about 77% of the respondents had school attendance stories from grades 1 to 8, with the exception of 9%, which is categorized under not being able to read and write, or educational blindness.

	Total	130	100.0
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SOURCE: Interview with female domestic workers, Nov 2021, N=130

Due to their rural upbringing, as shown in the Table, respondents were unfamiliar with the metropolitan community's way of life. All respondents were single (never married), with the exception of 3.8%, who are married or divorced. As shown in the table above, individuals who have never married migrate more frequently than those who have.

In terms of work experience, the majority (90%) of the respondents were in the category of 2–5 years of experience, but only 10% had 6–8 years of work experience. This is perhaps the intention of the withdrawal from local domestic work and the migration to the Middle East countries. Obviously, most female domestic workers who are belong to poor family used small towns and cities as a place to do and learn about domestic work and as a place where funds are raised to cover the visa process to the destination, the Gulf countries.

### 3.2. Pathways to Employment as Domestic via Brokers

Brokers are intermediaries that facilitate transactions across different sectors in Ethiopia, such as the purchase or rental of housing

and vehicles, as well as the employment of domestic workers. Employers looking for domestic workers and employees seeking domestic work both need a mediator to connect the two parties. These individuals are considered intermediaries, whether they are licensed or unlicensed. However, the majority of *delalas* operate as legal enterprises. In the employment process, particularly by the unlicensed facilitators, no agreements are ever made in writing. For their services, they demand a certain fee. But both licensed and unlicensed are involved in the facilitation process, the licensed brokers in their formal office (overtly) and the other obscurely (illegally). During their first decision to be a domestic worker, all of the respondents reported that they were advised by another person or persons.

Both licensed and unlicensed brokers (*delalas*) are active and organized in the facilitation of employment for the migrants. They do operate within networks, despite it being challenging to estimate the size of the network.

**Table 2:** Distribution of responses on Facilitation of Domestic Worker

Item		Frequency	Percent
Was there anybody who helped you decide to become a domestic worker? (In the beginning)	Yes	130	100.0
	No	—	—
	Total	130	100
Who was the person that facilitated your Domestic Work?	Broker	47	36.2
	Friend	34	26.2
	Parent	34	26.2
	Relatives	14	10.8
	Other	1	0.8
	Total	130	100.0
How did the person “convince” you to become a Domestic worker?	Promise of employment	33	25.4
	Promise of supporting parents	49	37.7
	Promise to arrange work abroad (Gulf Countries)	47	36.2
	Other	1	0.8

	Total	130	100.0
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SOURCE: Response of female domestic workers, Nov 2021, N=130

As mentioned in Table 2, more than one-third of them (36%) publicized that their employment was facilitated by brokers (licensed or unlicensed), while the remaining two-thirds were assisted by parents, relatives, or friends. Unlike Elsa's (2011) finding, in which parents took a limited role in their daughter's decision-making process to become a domestic worker. But in this study, parents had a significant role, whatever the reason for their involvement could be.

Regarding the "convincing" promises given by the facilitators during the decision making process for domestic work, the respondents disclosed that all the intermediaries were told persuasive promises. The first and most persuasive promise given by the brokers to the employees was to support the family left behind. This is perhaps due to a couple of reasons. On the one hand, the immigrants might be belong to poor families, and this is probably the reason why they are easily persuaded by the promise made by the intermediaries to help their families. On the other hand, it has become accustomed for migrant female domestic workers to send money to their families, friends, and religious centers (churches) in an attempt to obtain favor and make their families proud of them.

The second underlined persuasive promise given by the brokers was the arrangement of work abroad (Middle Eastern countries). Female domestic workers who work in the town and rural girls who may move to urban areas in the study area are very curious and have aspirations of immigrating to the Middle East. They disclosed that she has been dreaming of migrating to the Middle East (Arab) countries in order to change their lives

and their families' lives as well. Furthermore, parents are also possessed by sending their daughters to the Middle East in order to collect remittances for their families.

Consistently, the interviewed parents replied as follows:

*A reason to permit my daughter to be engaged in domestic work in urban areas is because I was not able to support my family by working on the farm. Due to the farmland's intermittent lack of productivity, life becomes very challenging, and I am unable to provide for my family's needs. I, therefore, sent her to the city to get accustomed to city life in the hopes that she would be sent to the Middle East to aid us. However, I was unable to receive the agents' promises. (Interviewed on Dec 2021)*

The promise of the unlicensed brokers in the study area is trusted by the parents and guardians of the domestic workers because they are considered as members of the community and popular among the community.

### 3.3. Priority of Respondents to Intermediaries

There are numerous agents and parties, such as friends, brokers, relatives, parents, and others, involved in the facilitation process for domestic work who function as mediators between the employee and the employer. Employees' priorities for facilitators vary depending on their social networks and their awareness level about them. Cognizant of this, nearly half of the respondents prefer unlicensed brokers to get employment, whereas 19.2% only use licensed ones.



Table 3: Response on Legal Status of Brokers

Item		Frequency	Percent
For the first time, was there anybody who helped you decide to become a domestic worker?	Yes	130	100
	No	-	-
	Total	130	130
If the person was broker, how was his/her legal Status?	Licensed broker	7	14.9
	Unlicensed broker	33	70.2
	I don't know	7	14.9
	Total	47	100
Intermediate preference of Domestic workers to get employment	Licensed Broker	25	19.2
	Parent/Guardians	35	26.9
	Unlicensed broker	56	43.1
	Relatives	13	10.0
	Friends	1	0.8
	Total	130	100.0

SOURCE: Response of female domestic workers, Nov 2021, N=130

Parents/guardians were the second-most popular choice of the respondents to get employment rather than licensed brokers. Regarding unlicensed brokers, they are invisible, and the government considers them illegal, i.e., they are considered as put domestic workers into miserable lives by pushing them into situations that cause them suffering. Despite the objectionable connotation mentioned by the government about unlicensed brokers, they are the top choice of the respondents (female domestic workers) to find employment. This condition might be because of their strong social network among the community that they have made with; and because the amount of charge they requested their customers to pay is less than what is licensed.

Even the interviewing employers supported the idea that unlicensed brokers are preferred

over legally licensed ones for a couple of reasons. The first one is related to the amount of charge they are required to pay while they facilitate employees for the employers. Unlike licensed brokers who requested unreasonable payment for their brokerage, the amount of charge asked by the unlicensed brokers for their brokerage service is not exaggerated; and the monthly salary fixed to employees is reasonable and convincing.

On top of this, the other reason employers rely on unlicensed brokers is their exclusion from interfering in interpersonal relations between employees and employers. As employers disclosed, the licensed brokers lobbied the employees to stop their work, and they made arrangements for another place with a better salary. The reason behind this plan is not to serve the interests of the employees, but rather, when the employees shift from one employer to another, the broker will

collect their commission and calculate their advantage at the expense of the employees. Then, female domestic workers thought of a pretext, citing things like the need to visit sick family members and other reasons to cease and leave.

Employers are offended because employees inform them that they will be leaving in a short period of time, and they may not be able to find another employee to replace them. This kind of story was underscored repeatedly by the employers as a point of contention towards both employees and licensed brokers. This situation made employers become belligerent, sometimes violent, and deduct from their salaries for materials that were broken while they were working. Finally, employers would not be passionate about their employees as a result; they would not treat them properly and would even put them in exploitative situations. This paved the way for the vulnerability of the female domestic workers because of the licensed brokers. This indicates that whether directly and/or indirectly licensed brokers played roles in setting female domestic workers vulnerable to different forms of violence.

### 3.4. “Safe” and “Unsafe” Brokers for Female Domestic Workers

From the beginning, the intention of the government to license brokers is to make them "safe" for the employees as well as for the employers, because unlicensed brokers are considered exploitative, abusive, and violent, or "unsafe" for the migrant girls. This implies the prevalence of a large number of unlicensed brokers in the study area, which suggests a high rate of exploitation and violence. In reverse, reducing the number of unlicensed brokers from the market would mean working at the same time on creating a safe

environment for the female domestic workers. By default, both employees and employers would choose licensed brokers when looking for their service. However, the reality of the exploitation of the subjects by the intermediaries (both unlicensed and licensed brokers) is totally antithetical.

In terms of intermediates, which of the following do you think "unsafe" for you in joining domestic work?

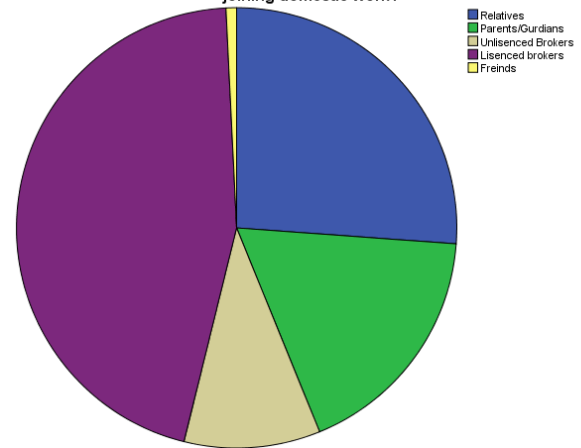


Figure 1. Distribution of responses on “safe” and “Unsafe” brokers

In this study, the notion of "safe" and "unsafe" is in the context of female domestic workers' vulnerability, which includes a comfortable employment process, freedom from different forms of violence committed against the subject by the brokers during the recruitment process, and staying in with the brokers until they find employers. Furthermore, in this study, contrary to the intention of the government, the evidence from the respondents revealed that licensed brokers are much more "unsafe" for the employee than unlicensed brokers, and licensed brokers have been more exploitative and "unmanly" than unlicensed brokers. This implies that the intention of the government in licensing unlicensed brokers is not efficient in combating exploitation against female domestic workers.

On the other side, the situation made it possible for many unregistered brokers to work as agents to contact employees and employers in both rural and urban locations. They want to make money from their engagement in the brokerage by receiving a commission for their assistance. These elements helped the number of unlicensed brokers in the broker industry increase.

### 3.5. Prevalence of Violence by Intermediaries Against female domestics

Domestic worker violence is a significant problem that needs to be addressed. Several domestic workers, according to the International Domestic Workers' Federation, experience various types of violence, including

physical abuse, intimidation, threats, bullying, sexual attack, harassment, bad food, and a lack of privacy. Murder and other severe acts of brutality have been recorded. It is not common to address the prevalence of violence committed by brokers or intermediaries against migrant women domestic workers. Prevalence of violence, which is the frequency of abuse committed by the brokers against female domestic workers while they were looking for employment via brokers (licensed or unlicensed brokers), is addressed in this section.

**Table 3: Prevalence of violence committed against subjects by brokers**

Item	Options	Frequency	Percent
Have you ever experienced any sort of trouble, or violence (such as sexual, physical, psychological, and others) while looking for work via brokers?	Yes,	51	39.2
	No	45	34.6
	No response	34	26.2
	Total	130	100.0
If your answer is yes, what type of violence have you faced?	Physical	11	21.6
	Sexual	27	52.9
	Psychological	4	7.8
	Economic (charging more than required)	9	17.6
	Total	51	100
Who was the person that abused (such as sexual, physical, psychological, and others) you in the brokerage process	Unlicensed brokers	11	21.6
	Licensed broker	27	52.9
	One working with a licensed broker	8	15.7
	The person looking for work via a licensed broker	4	7.8
	Other	1	1.9
	Total	51	100
Who was the person that committed sexual harassment against you?	Unlicensed brokers	3	11
	Licensed broker	20	74
	One working with a licensed broker	4	14.8

	Total	27	100
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SOURCE: Response of female domestic workers, Nov 2021, N=130

In most cases, domestic workers in general and migrant female domestic workers in particular were subjected to various forms of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. In the aforementioned context, therefore, different forms of violence were committed against female domestic workers while they were waiting for employers via licensed brokers. However, 26.2% of the respondents answered "I don't know" for the violence experienced during their stay in the brokers' office. The 'I don't know' option may include respondents who are unwilling to disclose personal issues, especially violence, for a variety of reasons, including intimidation from the perpetrator, proximity to an agent, and emotional distress.

Regarding the person who has committed violence, licensed brokers and their office assistants (as required to have at least 2 office assistants) were the main offenders, followed by male domestic workers awaiting employment through licensed brokers. Despite the culture of shyness to disclose sexual harassment committed against them, sexual violence overrides (52%) another type of violence committed by the brokers against the subjects. The study by Mekonnen, (2014:710) reported that 72 percent of the superficially responding respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment by brokers without identifying the type of broker. However, in this study specific to the type of broker who committed violence against their customers, 74% were committed by the licensed brokers, and 14.8% were by the one who works with the licensed brokers (assistants in the office). But compared to the licensed brokers, 11% of the sexual abuse was committed by the illegal brokers.

This demonstrates that licensed brokers were the main actors of sexual violence against their female domestic workers while looking for employment via brokers. And their brokerage service frequently exposes female domestic workers to a serious risk of abuse.

Interviewed labor and social affairs department expert by mentioning proclamation no 1156/2019 stated that the main purpose of licensing brokers is to prevent violence against domestic workers and to secure employees from different kinds of exploitation taking place by unlicensed brokers, and even by employers. Concerning employers, the assumption of licensing brokers stated that it would benefit in the prevention of robberies and thefts committed by employees and their collaborators against employers. Because the employees are from the licensed broker, by default, they have a contract agreement form that includes an emergency contact person to call. However, the reality is completely the reverse, as manifested in this study, i.e., abuses committed by the licensed brokers and their collaborators override those committed by the unlicensed ones. As long as licensed brokers are not preventing female domestic workers from violence, unlicensed brokers become the preference for the employees to get work and to be free from violence. This implies that the vulnerability of female domestics is increasing due to the licensed brokers rather than reducing it.

One of the interviewees from IDI female domestics replied as follows:

*One of the licensed brokers we contacted for employment has many troubles that could not be handled in our capacity. Many women were raped at the choice of a broker in his home and*

*he warned us not to tell anyone. Worse still, he and his assistant spoke to the man and they took what they agreed with and then made us go with him (as a prostitute) to cover our expenses we stayed at his home. Unless we are going to be punished and imprisoned you by reporting a thief. Finally, women engaged in sex work and eventually stayed there as a prostitute. More than two of my friends are now prostitutes in the Hosanna town at night. (Interview in Alemu W/Hana School, Nov, 2021).*

Basically, female domestics are contacting to licensed brokers to get domestic work not to be involved sex work. As long as they are migrant girls from rural to urban areas, they may not have power to protect themselves and they do not have awareness to whom they will report. This paved ways to be manipulated by the licensed brokers because they are the person they depend to be employed and planned to achieve their life goals (helping family left behind, going to the Middle East, and others). However, they would be exploited, sexually violated and even sent to sex work by this recognized agents.

*Furthermore, when female domestic workers are raped by their employers and/or someone in their home, some licensed brokers give coverage for the crime by communicating with the violator to favor it by taking some advantage (money) from employers. This designates that the vulnerability of female domestic workers was exploited by licensed brokers, and instead of preventing violence*

against female domestic workers, they became the main perpetrators of crimes committed against them, whether directly or indirectly.

### **3.6. Parents' Intervention on Employment of female domestics**

Many youngsters begin doing very informal domestic work for other people in their neighborhood or not far from their parents' home. Then, at the parents' invitation, relatives or friends of their parents bring the youngsters to towns as they grow physically (Kifle, 2002). Therefore, parents have played their own roles, especially in initiating their children's participation in domestic work in the towns. In line with aforementioned study, this study as depicted in table 2, all except 13.9%, of the respondents supported that parents/guardians were totally interested and even push their daughters to be domestic workers in the town and their intention is just to collect income via them. Plus, 69% of the respondents disclosed that their parents/guardians suggested their daughters to send to overseas, the Middle East countries, to be domestic workers by arranging some amount of expense. This implies that parents were initiate their daughters to be domestic workers rather than they complete their education.

This finding is consistent with the finding of Population Council (2021) which labeled an individual's decision for immigration was not made solely by the migrant but also by their relatives, especially their families and parents.

**Table 4: Distribution of responses on parents' initiation to be domestic workers**

Items		Frequency	Percent
They push you to be involved in DW to earn income via you	Very High	29	22.3
	High	53	40.8

	Neutral	30	23.1
	Low	11	8.5
	Not at all	7	5.4
	Total	130	100.0
They suggest you go to the Middle East (Gulf countries) to engage in DW	Very High	37	28.5
	High	53	40.8
	Neutral	15	11.5
	Low	7	5.4
	Not at all	18	13.8
	Total	130	100.0
The level of communication between your family and brokers in your town or city, both licensed and unlicensed, regarding your employment in domestic work	Very High	21	16.2
	High	31	23.8
	Neutral	36	27.7
	Low	31	23.8
	Not at all	11	8.5
	Total	130	100.0
The state of utter rejection of the idea of involvement in domestic work	Very High	9	6.9
	High	22	16.9
	Neutral	32	24.6
	Low	33	25.4
	Not at all	34	26.2
	Total	130	100.0
Did your parent/s (both or one) or guardians deal with employers to employ you without your consent?	Yes,	54	41.5
	Never	43	33.1
	I do not know	33	25.4
	Total	130	100.0

SOURCE: Response of female domestic workers, Nov 2021, N=130

The level of parents' or guardians' communication with brokers (particularly with unlicensed brokers) about the hiring process for their daughters was high. This indicates that parents/guardians had an understanding of the hiring process of domestic workers in the town, and the accessibility of unlicensed brokers in their rural areas, and their strong communication with them.

Moreover, respondents disclosed that their parents/guardians communicate with the employers without their daughters' consent to hire them. The decision making of their daughters were totally taken by their parents of the female domestic workers. Further-

more, of the total respondents, about half illustrated that their parents (both or one) presented during the deal with employers together with the brokers. This implies, in addition to their initiation to be employed in domestics, parents were playing the role of brokers in the process of facilitation of employment of their daughters. This made ways easy to know the location of the household in the town and helps to collect the monthly salary of their daughters even in advance.

In line with this discourse, one of the interviewed employers reported as follows:

*“Parents are now fully involved in facilitating domestic work as intermediaries starting with recruitment. They even drag their daughters from*

*one employer's home to another without the consent of workers and employers. They contact us via phone and ask to send their daughter who is with us by expressing the social problems that occurred between the family left behind, the family program, mourning (the most common lie), and other pretexts. They do not ask us to increase their salary, but rather withdraw her and hire her from other employers. On the other hand, they ask us to pay 4 months and above salary in advance on their daughter's salary." (age & sex of the interviewee?)*

This stated the extent of involvement of parents in the employment process of their daughters as brokers do. Other interviewed employers were also indifferent to this idea and they consolidated by underscoring the awkward interruption of the parents. Some parents called their daughters (employees) to their homes without informing employers to look for another domestic worker to replace. This made employers not kind and humble to their employees, and others have taken the clothes of the employees and imposed deductions for the broken and lost materials. At the end of the day, the female domestic workers remain null because on one hand their monthly salaries are taken by their parents, and on the other hand, they have no positive interaction with employers due to the interference of the parents/guardians. Of the total respondents, about half illustrated that their parents (both or one) presented during the deal with employers together with the brokers. This implies that the parents are playing the role of brokers in the process of facilitation of employment.

#### **4. Discussion**

The results of this study showed that the demographic profile of the respondent proved that their age was below the legal working age set by the country's law, and that their education level was more on the primary level, rendering it impossible for them to be aware of their fundamental human rights. Unlike the findings of other researchers, such as Getachewu (2006), in which half of the respondents were illiterates, this study came up with the finding that respondents had stories of schooling. This is probably due to the good scope of government educational expansion, and the attitude of society toward female education has probably become more favorable.

The majority of respondents preferred unlicensed to licensed brokers, while both licensed and unlicensed brokers were the primary agents to contact companies with potential employees. The unlicensed brokers are well liked by the locals, and they maintain close relationships with local elders and religious leaders. Furthermore, they are also readily accessible in rural areas with their chains. Regarding violence, the study of Makonnen (2017) and Mulugeta (2017) underscored that 72 percent of the superficially responding respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment by brokers without identifying the type of broker. But in the study at hand, the result was revealed: unlike unlicensed brokers, female domestic workers were sexually harassed by licensed brokers and their assistants in their offices. Offices of licensed brokers operated as both a location for sexual harassment and a site for either consenting or non-consenting recruitment of workers for sex work. As a result, the structure of licensed brokers (manager to assistant) has played a significant part in

the study population's vulnerability by letting respondents live in appalling conditions rather than standing up for their rights.

In the hopes of attaining the improved pay arrangements promised by the licensed brokers, female domestic workers left their occupations without giving the employers sufficient time to find another employee. This is, however, not for the benefit of the workers; rather, it is for the financial benefits of the brokers. Due to this situation, employers grew irate with their domestic workers. As a result of other female domestics absconding from their jobs without telling their employers to replace them, other domestics were punished cruelly and mercilessly. As indicated in the finding, the attitude of parents about the involvement in facilitation of their daughters in domestic work was welcoming; and even so, it is becoming a culture of the community with the intention of collecting the daughter's monthly salaries.

In consistence with other scholars such as Aboye (2019) and Kifle (2002) about the involvement of parents in facilitation, relatives, friends, or even parents bring children to towns as they mature physically to engage in domestic work, and they also play a facilitation role by contacting employers and brokers. Plus, parents create communication with employers, sometimes collect the monthly salary in advance, and take materials like flour, clothes, oil, *enjera*, and other used resources home. Due to this favor, even if the situation is miserable for the employees, she could not leave the employers' home.

On the other hand, if these advantages are not given, parents may lobby their daughters to

abscond to find employment with better salaries at other employers. This scene of parents upset employers and degraded humbleness and kindness from them towards their employees. Finally, dissatisfaction with employers by parents paved the way for the vulnerability of domestic workers, such as when they maltreat their employers with sympathy, humility, and exclusive constant control, sometimes commit physical violence, and work beneath a veil of maltreatment by their employers. As a result, female domestic workers are the objects of extreme exploitation in terms of toiling, such as loss of decision making power on their personal issues starting from involvement, salary control, and being powerless to defend themselves.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings showed that licensed brokers and their assistants were more likely to harass female domestic workers in their workplaces than were unregistered brokers. Additionally, sexual harassment and the solicitation of employees for sex work, with or without their consent, took occurring at the licensed brokers' office and the location where workers stayed to contact employers. As a result, the hierarchy of licensed brokers (manager to assistant) greatly contributed to the study population's vulnerability and allowed the respondents to live in desperate circumstances rather than standing up for their rights. Female domestic employees quit their jobs in anticipation of the licensed brokers' promises of a better pay package.

However, charging is in their best interest, not the employee's. Employers became strict, unforgiving, and brutal toward their employees as a result of these experiences, even if the employees were not part of the trend. This circumstance led to employers being



dissatisfied and disillusioned with their employees. According to the findings, parents welcomed their daughters working as housewives, but despite this, it is becoming more common in the neighborhood with the goal of paying the daughters' earnings on a monthly basis. Additionally, parents encourage their daughters to run away to work for better-paying employers, much like brokers do. Employers' humility and generosity toward their employees were degraded by this scene of parents, which upset them.

Moreover, dissatisfaction of employers contributes to the vulnerability of domestic workers, such as when they maltreat their employers with sympathy, humility, and exclusive, constant control, sometimes commit physical violence, and work beneath a veil of maltreatment by their employers. Finally, female domestics have left a void, and they have become vulnerable to extreme exploitation by their employers. As a result, female domestic workers are the objects of extreme exploitation in terms of toiling, such as loss of decision making power on their personal issues starting from involvement, salary, and being powerless to defend themselves. On top of this, continued violence, social exclusion contribute to the development of hatred and revenge against the community and employers through acts such as theft, murder, and looting.

This finding helps to recommend new perspectives regarding the indispensability of follow-up work on the licensing process of the brokers. Plus, strengthening consultations with the local community, parents, and employers is underscored by creating emergency funds from the stakeholders and concerned agencies.

## Acknowledgement

This study would not have been possible without the active participation of the following institutions, offices, and individuals. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Kassahun Asres and Dr. Annabel Erulkar, for their guidance and support throughout this research project. "I would like to thank my institution, Arba Minch University, for the financial support for the project. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of my research assistants in the field for data collection as well as the institutions that helped me to achieve my project objectives. I would like to thank my family and friends for their unwavering support throughout this research project.

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