

**Causes and Consequences of Sexual Abuse and Resilience Factors in Housemaids
Working in Addis Ababa: A Qualitative Inquiry**

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Abstract

This study explored the resilience of sexually abused female housemaids in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study employed exploratory qualitative methods, using in-depth and key informant interviews to collect data. The participants were one broker, one counselor, and eight purposively selected housemaids who were young, single female migrants with impoverished family backgrounds. Among the eight study participants, four experienced rape, one faced attempted rape, and the remaining three had their private body parts touched without their consent. Contexts that enhanced possibilities of sexual abuses, as expressed by respondents, include drinking of perpetrators, absence of wives from the home, lack of well-defined boundaries to the sector, and tricked with false promises. As a result, study participants faced emotional disturbance, distrust, hopelessness, job insecurity, unsafe abortion, unwanted pregnancy, and contracted HIV. The major strategies used by sexually abused housemaids to become resilient identified were normalizing the problem, disclosing, religious coping, personal values, and setting positive life goals. The study calls for service providers, professionals, policy makers, and legal agencies to recognize the issue of sexual abuse in housemaids as fertile ground for intervention research and practice.

Keywords: Housemaids, Resilience, Sexual abuse.

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Background

Sexual abuse is a traumatic life experience that can happen to anyone. Sexually abused women were found to live with fear, frustration, shame, loss of self-esteem and lack of confidence unless they receive appropriate professional help or have the personal strength to cope (WHO, 2005).

A World Health Organization study of 24,000 women from 10 different countries with different cultures found that 15% to 71% had experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime. One out of 3 women worldwide has experienced rape or sexual assault. In sub-Saharan Africa, 59% of Ethiopian women, 59% of Zambian women, 47% of Tanzanian women, and 43% of Kenyan women have ever experienced sexual violence (World Health Organization [WHO], 2005).

Housemaids, who spent their whole time on domestic work with informal contract and low payment, are often victims of sexual abuse which includes assault, rape and other forms of sexual exploitation for various reasons (Anderson, 2000; West, 2006). Given the disproportionately high poverty rate in Ethiopia, the undignified nature of domestic work in the society, the socio-economic situation of domestic workers, and lack of access to legal and social services, one can easily imagine the vulnerability of domestic workers for sexual violence (Selamawit, 2007).

Sexually abused women in turn are prone to subsequent physical, psychosocial and health problems such as job insecurity, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, unwed parenthood, prostitution as well as psychological problems (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2000; WHO, 2005).

Violence has a significant impact on the health and life expectancy of women. Rape and domestic abuse account for 5% of deaths of women at reproductive age in developing countries (United Nations Development Fund for Women [UNDFW], 2005). Research has also shows that sexual abuse potentially leads to mental health problems such as personality disorders, anxiety disorders and major affective disorders (Ubido & Scott-Samuel, 2011).

However, there are women who develop coping strategies to be resilient and function well despite the various adversities they encounter. Many complex variables may determine whether a woman will function well after sexual abuse. These include her internal strength, the legal response, her educational background, economic factors, community support and the extent of the abuse itself (Ahmed, 2007; Faith et al; 2008).

Local studies (Addisu, 2001; Selamawit, 2007) indicate sexual abuse is one of the serious challenges in the life of housemaids. However, there is no comprehensive and adequate study in Ethiopia to show the positive life experience of sexually abused housemaids. Therefore, this study was undertaken to explore the type of sexual abuse female housemaids who work in Addis Ababa had experienced, the possible contributing factors and consequences of sexual abuse, and strategies that contribute to become resilient. Such information can be helpful for policy makers, social workers, psychologists and social service providers to design programs and strategies that may be helpful to prevent or minimize the impact of sexual abuse using a strength perspective.

Review of Literature

Domestic Work

Domestic work in Ethiopia has two basic categories - the first involves individual domestic workers who work within the family without payment. This is mainly performed by children and women family members and may not be hazardous as such. The second form of domestic work is performed in unrelated households with payment who are known as housemaids. This category can be hazardous which makes women prone to exploitation and abuse. The job arrangements are

frequently made informally between the housemaids or the employing agent (brokers) and the employer. Currently, there are two categories of paid housemaids in Ethiopia - live-in or full-time workers, in which the majority of workers belong, and live-out or part-time workers (*Temelalash* in Amharic) (Selamawit, 2007).

Violence against Housemaids

In reality, the status and role of housemaids in Ethiopia is that of a master and a servant (Abiy, 2002). The sense of being non-relative makes housemaids vulnerable to various forms of violence (Motesi, 1990). The context of isolation in which these workers live, coupled with their low social status, makes them susceptible to a range of physical, sexual, and psychological violence (ILO, 2000).

Amnesty International's (2006) report also showed many domestic workers live in inadequate and abusive conditions of work, have no contractual relationships with their employers, are subjected to massive underpayment, work long hours with no rest, and face major obstacles to joining a union. Domestic workers in Ethiopia are not exceptions to these prevalent forms of mistreatment.

Contributing factors for Sexual Abuse

No single factor alone can 'cause' violence against women, rather a number of interrelated factors work in combination at different levels increasing the likelihood of individual to engage in a violent action (WHO, 2005). There are different arguments about factors that expose women to different forms of sexual abuse. Meyer (2000) suggested that slightly different biological make-up of perpetrators can contribute to sexual assault. These studies argue that a difference is found in the hormones and other chemicals in the body, as well as in the brain that may cause abnormalities that may lead someone to sexually abuse others.

On the other hand, Leather and Lawrence (1999) argued that it is the interaction of developmental and environmental factors that lead someone into abusive relationship. In this regard, lack of social conscience, attitudes, and gender schemas, sociocultural influences, and poor family relationships are mentioned as contributing factors for sexual abuse.

In Ethiopian context, Nestanet (1999) argued that the issue of sexual abuse could be exacerbated by the different socio-cultural norms which condone men's superiority and women's submissiveness. Sexual abuse in Ethiopia is often justified by the naturalistic argument that men are likely to be aggressive as a result of their biological nature when in fact abuse is mainly concerned with gender socialization and power. In the case of domestic workers, sexual abuse may be characterized by an unwelcome imposition of sexual requirements in the context of extreme inequality of power in the employer-employee relationship, combined with desperation to keep the job on the part of the employee (Addisu, 2001; Selamawit, 2007).

Consequences of Sexual Abuse

Research has shown that domestic workers who have experienced sexual assault became victims of sexual and reproductive health problems, such as sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy and adverse pregnancy outcomes, including miscarriage and low birth weight infants (Moors, 2003).

Ullman and Brecklin (2003) indicated that women who have been sexually assaulted exhibit a variety of emotional and behavioral problems such as fear, anxiety, depression, and sexual dysfunction. In this sense, a sexual assault can shatter the victim's construction of reality and challenge her coping strategies.

Legal Issues and Housemaids

In many countries, housemaids are not included in the domain of labor legislation. As a result, many housemaids are prevented from attaining an adequate standard of living, reasonable working hours, the right to rest, and the right to form a union (Ramirez-Machado, 2003; Tomasevski, 1993).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) stipulate special provisions for the protection of women's rights. Specifically, ILO (2002) stipulates the international standards on decent work conditions and bounds state parties to ensure their application. However, their enforcement in many developing countries is usually minimal.

In Ethiopia, Proclamation No.42/1993, the existing labor law legislation, explicitly sets aside housemaids from its realm and stipulates that their rights and duties will be governed under a special regulation (Proc. 42/1993, Art. 3(1)). Title XVI of the Ethiopian Civil Code which deals with the contract of particular kinds of work has a section containing special provisions concerned with the contracts of resident domestic employment but does not address their rights as workers. It also does not give a definition of what constitutes a "domestic worker."

Rationale for the Study

In Ethiopia, housemaids contribute major role, through their care and services, to the lives of many working class populations. In reality, such women represent one of the vulnerable populations who have less respect in the society and face many challenges. However, housemaids are one of the most understudied populations in Ethiopia (Selamawit, 2007).

Sexual abuse is one of the major challenges of housemaids. Fear of losing job is a big trap for many domestic workers to stay in domestic work (Addisu, 2001; Selamawit, 2007). However, no studies have examined resiliency among domestic workers. Therefore, this study explored both internal and external resilient factors that build strengths and positive survival of abused domestic workers

In this context, the ability to function well after sexual trauma calls for the use of positive survival techniques or intrapersonal strengths and social support systems available in the society (Ahmed, 2007). The findings in this study provided useful information to alleviate the situation of sexually abused housemaids and to develop protective policies and intervention plans that can promote and empower housemaids. Exploring how these women deal with life challenges is helpful especially for those women who have no alternative to leaving the line of work and would like to minimize their risks.

Research Question

The main research question of this study was: How resilient are housemaids who are survivors of sexual abuse to function well in their lives?

Specific Questions:

- What **circumstances** expose housemaids to sexual abuse?
- What are the psychosocial and health **consequences** of sexual abuse as described by housemaids?
- What are the **contributing strategies** for sexually abused housemaids to become resilient?

Methods

Research Design

An exploratory qualitative phenomenological approach was found to be appropriate to explore contributing factors, consequences of sexual abuse, and the resiliency strategies used by housemaids. The data was obtained based on the participants' interpretation of their reality and lived experience (Richard & Grinnell, 1997).

Study Site

This study was conducted in the city of Addis Ababa the capital of Ethiopia with a population of over 3 million. This city was chosen because there are many housemaids in the city who are mainly migrated from the rural areas with different sociocultural backgrounds. Being immigrant and living away from families might increase the risk of housemaids to sexual abuse which in turn challenge housemaids to source out different strategies to cope with problems they are facing. This makes the city an ideal place to investigate contributing factors and consequences of sexual abuse, and experiences of resiliency strategies for housemaids.

Participant Selection Techniques

To identify housemaids for the study, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed. From the eight participants; five were identified from the broker's office and one from the Organization against Gender Based Violence (*Tsotawi Tekate Tekelaky Maheber* or TTTM). Snowball technique was used to find one case via a friend who already recruited from the TTTM office.

Participant Selection Criteria

Criteria used to determine the eligibility of eight prospective participants include:

- Paid housemaids who were 18 years old and above, who work in live-in base. Unpaid housemaids are excluded because mainly they are living with relatives and were not visited either the broker or service providing organization (TTTM) during the time of data collection.
- Housemaids who had faced different psychological, social or health problems due to the sexual abuse they encountered,
- Housemaids who have used different coping strategies after encountering sexual abuse,
- Housemaids who were willing to participate in the study.

Data Collection Instruments

As mentioned by Ritchie and Lewis (2003), the researcher has to choose methods that are practical, cost-effective, time-efficient, and culturally sensitive that can help get adequate information as much as possible. Taking these factors into consideration, in-depth face to face interview was used as data collection tool for this study. An interview guide was prepared in Amharic language. Open-ended questions used to obtain housemaids' oral narratives about their demographic profile, contributing factors and consequences of sexual abuse, and strategies that helped them to become resilient.

Ethical Considerations

The majority of issues raised in the interviews can be considered sensitive issues. Thus, informed consent of the participants was obtained to assure their voluntary participation. The aim of the study and the benefits and risks of participating in the study were discussed before the actual interview. Study participants were not asked to disclose their names to protect their anonymity.

Data Processing and Analysis Procedure

The interviews with housemaids were undertaken privately at TTTM office and the researcher home for those who were recruited from the broker's office. Each interview took 2 to 3 hours with tea-break. Careful steps were followed to transcribe the tape-recorded and notes taken in Amharic and to translate into English. The data collected was logged in accordance with dates, cases, and content. The data were then analyzed thematically to bring meaningful coherence to the themes, patterns, and categories.

Results

Profiles of the Study Participants

As illustrated in Table 1, the 8 study participants ranged in age from 18 to 27. All eight had migrated from rural areas-five from Gondar, Amhara region and the others were from Nekmet, Wolo, and Jimma. All of the participants were single women affiliated with the *Orthodox Tewahido* religion. All except one participant were at the primary education level. However, only three participants were in school during the time of the study. Participants mentioned various reasons for being employed as domestic workers such as death of a parent, running away from early marriage, separation of parents, induced by false promises of relatives or a stranger, to gain access to education, and to support their family financially.

The participants served in domestic work from 3 to 12 years and earned a monthly salary ranging from 150 to 300 ETB (equivalent of \$7 to \$15 USD). These domestic workers entered into the field because it does not require special skill and can be done without formal occupational training.

Five participants were found at the broker's office while they were looking for employers a live-in work arrangement. Two study participants were living in the TTTM Safe House (drop in center) which provides basic needs, counseling, medical support, and life skill trainings to women who had been facing sever forms of physical or sexual violence. One respondent who used to live in the Safe House was found running her own small business.

Background of the broker (Delala in Amharic): The broker was a 32 year old married man. He ran a legally registered employer-employee contracting agency.

Background of TTTM: This is an Organization against Gender-Based Violence established in 2003. The interview was held with a 23 year old female lawyer who had been working as a project assistant.

Table 1: Profile of the Study Participants

Cases	Age	Birth place	Educational Status	Push and pull factors into domestic service	No of years in domestic work
Case 1	27	Gondar	7 th (Dropout)	Parents' separation	7
Case 2	20	Gondar	5 th (Dropout)	Parent death	9
Case3	20	Gondar	4 th (Active)	Induced by relative	5
Case 4	20	Gondar	5 th (Active)	To enroll in school	4
Case 5	22	Gondar	6 th (Dropout)	Parent death	7
Case 6	23	Wolo	4 th (Active)	Running away from	3
Case 7	18	Nekemt	5 th (Dropout)	To help family	4
Case 8	19	Jimma	No Schooling	Induced by a stranger	12

Contributing Factors for Sexual Abuse

As illustrated in Table 2, among the 8 study participants, four experienced actual rape, one participant faced attempted rape, and the remaining three were touched on their private body parts (breast, hip, and button) without their consent. Four of the perpetrators were male employers. The other four perpetrators were relatives of employers, a stranger, and a waitress who was working for the employer's cafe. The four study participants who had been raped revealed that they faced rape once. The remaining participants faced different forms of sexual abuse more than once.

The main causes of sexual abuse, as identified by participants, were ignoring the pre-sexual abuse acts and not leaving the perpetrators' home early, drinking of the perpetrator, low respect of the perpetrators, considering housemaids as sex workers, and the private nature of the work. For example, Case 3 recalled the incidence as:

One day, I went to a house of a man who agreed to employ me. Then he pulled me into his chest and said '*I do not want a housemaid, I want to have sex with you, I will give you 100 birr and you will go.*' I was shocked! I just begged him to let me go. When I started crying loudly he opened the door and I went off.

In this regard, the broker pointed that housemaids could be easily cheated by perpetrators' false promises to get money. The broker also commented on the unnecessary actions of housemaids who were interested in marrying their employers might contribute to the sexual abuse they had faced. However, Case 3 argued "*While sex workers can be easily available at bars and night clubs, why employers prefer domestic workers for sex?*" Absence of well defined boundary between domestic work and sex work and mixing up of job preferences is the other risk exposing factor explained by Case three.

Psychosocial and Health Consequences of Sexual Abuse

All of the study participants experienced emotional turmoil as a consequence of sexual abuse ranging from being hesitant towards men, depression, hopelessness, crying, nightmares, self-blaming, and hating themselves. Likewise, the TTTM project assistant and the broker mentioned that sexually abused domestic workers exhibited less control of emotions, unwillingness to eat, and blaming themselves frequently.

Two of the raped participants subsequently experienced unsafe abortions. These women mentioned they had no or little awareness about the consequence of unsafe abortion and they did not take any medical checkup, including HIV/AIDS test, after the abortion. One participant had a twins' pregnancy and the other one became HIV positive in addition to an unwanted pregnancy. These two women got support to start a small business and life skill trainings from TTTM. The children of these women were given up for adoption. Case 8 recalled her experience as follows:

A relative of my employer came to home. He was drunk. I shouted when he pulled me, but no one was around to help me. He raped me and went out. When my menstruation stopped coming, I told my employer about the rape but he fired me for falsely accusing his relative. I was pregnant of twins.

Table 2. Summary of Causes and Consequences of Sexual Abuse

Cases	Forms of sexual abuse	Perpetrator	Causes of abuse	Consequence
Case 1	Touched on her breast without her consent, verbal sexual remarks	Employer (Married)	Less respect towards domestic workers	Quitting of job, Emotional disturbance, Distrusting of men

Case 2	Raped	Employer (Married)	Ignoring the prerequisite acts of perpetrators	Unsafe abortion, Self-blaming
Case 3	Pulled in to the chest of the perpetrator, asked for sex	Employer (Single)	Misunderstanding between sex work and domestic work	Distrusting men, emotional disturbance
Case 4	Forced to touch the perpetrator's private body parts (Sex organ)	Employer (Divorced)	absence of wife from home	Emotional disturbance, Job insecurity
Case 5	Raped	Stranger	Private nature of the work	Unwanted pregnancy, HIV positive status, Sudden firing, Hating people
Case 6	Raped	Waitress		Unsafe abortion, Distrusting men
Case 7	Attempted rape	Employer's relative		Emotional disturbances, Job insecurity, Fear
Case 8	Raped	Employer's Relative	Drinking, private nature of the work	Twins pregnancy, Sudden firing, Hopelessness

Resilience Strategies to Cope with Sexual Abuse

Internal Strategies for Resilience

Efforts to prevent the incident: The immediate response of all but one participant to sexual abuse was trying to prevent the incident from happening by shouting, throwing objects, insulting the perpetrator, begging, and threatening to tell the police. Only one of the participants responded in silence. Participants explained their efforts did not succeed but gave them a sense of '*it was beyond my control and I could not help it.*'

Setting life goals and aspirations: Two study participants were looking for meaning in life by setting future goals and being optimistic about their future success. For example, Case 7 had a great ambition to be a great runner. In 2007 she got fifth rank in Ethiopian annual running competition. She said "*When I see Ethiopian runners win at international level, hope flourished into my heart to be a well known runner one day.*"

Personal conviction: Taking time to make positive life decisions and choosing constructive ways is another internal strength described by one study participant. Case 3 described the locus of self control which helped her in the face of adversity:

After I had faced sexual abuse I was thinking to work as a sex worker and fulfill my basic necessities but I withdrew myself from wrong decisions by saying I should not be like this or I should not go on in this way.

Denial or suppressing the incident: Finally, two of the study participants shared a different view of coping mechanisms. For example Case 6 cited forgetting the past or convincing herself that the problem had not happened as a strategy that helped her to escape from stressful feelings.

External Strategies for resilience

Caring relationships after disclosure: Seven of the eight participants disclosed the incident to significant others such as the perpetrators' family, neighbors, friends, relatives, brokers, a priest, as well as the media. Participants emphasized that sharing their emotions with others and the empathy they received back gave them relief and a feeling of belongingness. However, only one participant reported the incident to police though the perpetrator was not accused due to the unwillingness of neighbors to witnesses. The broker further added, some polices assume "*domestic workers engaged in the sexual act willingly and accused men as 'abusers' when the relationship ended.*" The broker also expressed the bureaucracy in the legal system is one obstacle for housemaids not to take their case to the court.

Case 5 who was raped by a stranger, became pregnant and contracted HIV mentioned: "*In those days I was blaming myself and God. But with the help of my counselor at TTTM, I stopped complaining about the past and began to plan for a better future.*" Regarding, the help the broker offers he said:

I advise those domestic workers who share me about the incident. I also lend money and give them a shelter until they found another employer. Since most of them are usually fired without receiving their salary.

Opportunities for job and life skill trainings: Two study participants have received help from TTTM. One participant trained with small business running skills. The other one received training on life skills. These participants mentioned that the counseling and trainings helped them to develop a sense of '*I am competent so that I will have a better opportunity.*'

Spiritual affiliation: Faith and religion is another resilience factor revealed by four participants. Participants emphasized the relief they have got from praying, confession, and going to spiritual programs. For example Case 1 said "*Whenever I got depressed, I used to go to church, laid on the floor and pray to God. Then I felt relieved.*"

Table 3. Resilience Factors of Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Internal Factors for Resilience	External Factors for Resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efforts to prevent the incident• Personal conviction• Denial or suppressing the incident• Setting life goals and aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caring relationships after disclosure• Spiritual affiliation• Opportunities for job and life skill training

Discussion

Housemaids who participated in this study were young women of low educational status who predominantly migrated from rural areas. Participants mentioned various reasons for their migration to Addis Ababa and to be employed as domestic workers such as death of a parent, running away from early marriage, separation of parents, induced by false promises of relatives or a stranger, to gain access to education, and to support their family financially.

Persistent levels of poverty, harmful traditional practices, lack of access to education, and limited opportunities for decent employment contribute to large numbers of young women to migrate in to large cities and being engaged in domestic work where they are exposed to high levels of violence (Amnesty International, 2006; Original, Emebet, & Mellese, 2004). After entering in to domestic work, lack of skill and training, insecure ways of finding other jobs and low economic status of

workers contribute for housemaids to stay in domestic work in a difficult situation (Ondimu, 2007). As a result, in Addis Ababa "... a good proportion of housemaids, particularly those over 12 years of age, were sexually harassed, mostly by sons of the employers" (Kifle, 2002).

Participants in this study articulated three categories of contributing factors for sexual abuse. The first theme includes factors related with themselves such as ignoring the pre-sexual abuse acts and not leaving the perpetrators' home early. The second themes are contexts related to the perpetrators such as drinking, low respect, considering housemaids as sex workers. The third theme emerged is the private and informal nature of the work which is also acknowledged by early research by Motesi (1990). Motesi emphasized that unorganized and private nature of the work, lack of legal recognition of the sector, and workers' lack of knowledge and awareness about their rights as the main factors which exacerbate workers' vulnerability to sexual abuse.

The absence of boundaries between sex work and domestic work was mentioned as one potential contributor of sexual abuse. In fact, there are women who run double jobs as domestic work and sex worker. However, this does not mean that all housemaids use sex work as alternative means of income generation, though many housemaids also lack self-confidence and be unaware of their rights so that they become easily cheated by perpetrators and enter in to commercial sex (Charney, 2004).

On the other hand, the broker emphasized that there are housemaids who had shown sexual interest towards their employers which might lead to sexual abuse. Of course, the majority of housemaids are usually adolescent girls below 20 years old who are curious about sexual relationship. In addition, the private nature of the work and absence of day off might hinder housemaids not to explore options outside home. Most women and children working as housemaids are not even allowed to go outside the compound in which they work unless they are ordered to undertake chores for other family members (Endeshaw, Gebeyehu, & Reta, 2008). Therefore, it may not be unusual to find housemaids who try to build intimacy with the available male individuals at home such as single employers, guards, and relatives in the house. But due to different cultural and religious reasons it's rare for housemaids to show sexual interest towards married employer unless they are forced to do so. In line with this, Nestanet (1999) argued that in Ethiopia issues and concepts related to the cause of sexual abuse are ill understood by the larger society. Due to this, it is common to blame victims as a major contributor and even initiators of sexual abuse.

In this study, only two individuals accessed institutional support for assistance with their traumatic life experience. Only one participant disclosed the issue to the police. The other participants mentioned religious affiliation, disclosing, silence, and normalizing the problem as a means to cope with trauma. Studies have shown that the courage to explain the incident and the caring relationships that is available after disclosure is helpful for victims of sexual abuse (Faith et al., 2008; Gunnestad, 2003).

However, in Ethiopia, getting institutional help for traumatic experiences is not a usual trend. This may be due to the absence of organizations working on rehabilitation, the general lack of awareness of victims to approach helping agencies, or the availability of informal support systems like families, friends, neighbors, and spiritual leaders whenever needed.

Amnesty International (2006) elaborates the existence of many obstacles in the legal and social systems that hamper the protection of domestic workers from abuse. On the other hand, scholars argue that young people at risk have low motivation to approach and utilize social support resources even when they knew it was available (Dumont & Provost, 1999; Lyon, 2002).

The study participants also emphasized the spiritual support that helped them to cope after sexual trauma. Research has shown that spirituality and religious beliefs are important factors in resilience. As Niaz (2006) reported praying and faith can be used as a source of strength to get through major problems in life by providing meaning and purpose in life.

Setting goals and searching for meaning from life were also noted by study participants as a resilience factor. Faith et al. (2008) and Rutter (1990) stated that aspiring to future success helps survivors not to bother about their past problems. Denial of the incident as a resilient factor was mentioned by one participant. Gunnestad (2003) reported that normalizing the abusive situation is used by a considerable proportion of victims, especially when there is no one around to help them. However, such kind of coping mechanism is not recommended due to its side effect of coming out in later life.

Conclusion

The findings in this study indicated that women domestic workers often have few or no options for other work. They also lack awareness and knowledge of their options since most come from poor families, are migrants from the countryside, and have little chance for education.

According to the study participants, the absence of clear boundaries between domestic worker and sex worker, drinking of employers, absence of wives from the home, little cooperation of the society to offer emergency help, and lack of legal enforcement are major factors which encouraged perpetrators to sexually abuse them. From the respondents' side, ignoring the prerequisite acts of perpetrators, fear of losing job, being cheated by false promises and lack of self-defense against the perpetrator's sexual advances were mentioned as risk exposing factors. The study identified that sexually abused domestic workers face difficulties ranging from emotional disturbance and physical damage up to serious reproductive health complications and HIV/AIDS.

Finally, the study assessed both internal and external factors to understand what helps sexually abused domestic workers to function well after sexual trauma. The study participants believe they are functioning well. The factors contributing to their resiliency included: social support, religious affiliation, disclosing, and normalizing the problem.

The study confirms the need for a holistic approach to address the challenges faced by sexually abused women. Attention should be given to the personal strengths of victims, the available community resources such as rehabilitation centers, religious institutions, health sectors, the police and legal systems as potential areas to improve the services available to sexually abused domestic workers.

Limitations of the Study

During the course of the study, there were some limitations which have surfaced to affect the study process. The study was limited to assess the perceived impact of sexual abuse because the study did not conduct actual check-ups to make sure that such recollections of the incidence as described by the victims were completely accurate. Thus, the sexual abuse was reported as perceived by housemaids without counter checking. Moreover, only eight housemaids were drawn as the study participants. Despite efforts were made to include additional participants it was difficult to obtain additional cases who could fulfill the selection criteria within the limited period of data collection. It should be noted that victims of sexual violence are a 'hidden group' that are difficult to access. This in turn put limitations in employing additional study participants to ensure data saturation. Despite such drawbacks, it is hoped that this research has achieved its purposes well.

Implications and Recommendations

- Domestic service is one of the unorganized and legally unrecognized informal sectors which support the life of many poor women. Social service providers should advocate for the

formulation of associations, labor law, and policy which specifically address the issues of housemaids. Moreover, empowering housemaid through education, and improving their ability to find employment and income, along with increasing public awareness of human rights issues through education could lower their exposure for sexual abuse

- This study applied resilience concepts which can be adopted to implement new strategies in the Ethiopian context. Previous studies in the area of housemaids were mainly problem-based and aimed to design preventive strategies. However, this research looked at how victims cope after experiencing sexual abuse, shifts the longtime problem and prevention focused research tradition into strengths perspective in order to build appropriate interventions if the problem already happened.
- In this study, the participants mentioned different strategies for resilience such as their own values and norms, friends, brokers, neighborhoods and helping agencies which helped them to stand in the face of adversity. Social service providers should be aware of the available formal and informal networks in the community and then prioritize options which are most applicable to sexually abused housemaids.
- There is a need to identify the gaps of service providers under the umbrella of government and nongovernment organizations. This will help to strengthen the needed services and enhance the positive development of sexually abused women.
- This study has implication for future researchers to identify what kind of services should be provided to improve the life of sexually abused housemaids and how to improve employers' awareness about the rights of housemaids?

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