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Young Ethiopian Women's Migration to the Middle East:

Agency, decision-making processes and empowerment

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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Contents

List of Appendices

List of Acronyms

EBS	Ethiopian Broadcasting Service
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPA	Grade Point Average
HDI	Human Development Index
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MoLSA	Minster of Labour and Social Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PEAs	Private Employment Agencies
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
RMMS	Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USD	United States Dollar

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Abstract

This study explored the decision-making processes and negotiations within the family and community and the factors that influence the young women's agency and negotiation capacity during their migration to the Middle East in Maichew town, Ethiopia. Data were collected through semi-structured interview with 23 respondents including returnees, parents, siblings, and a broker. Participant observation and informal conversations were also conducted. The decision-making process is found to be complex for it is influenced by different actors and happens in socio-economically limited options.

An important finding of the research is that migration is a household decision in which the young women migrate for a paid employment and remit money home to help the family. However, the young women also participate in the decision-making with varying degrees of involvement. Poor familial economic position, gender norms, age intersect and affect their agency. Therefore, the young women sometimes are pressurized to migrate with a less influence over the decisions, quite a few of them are involved in the decision-making processes. Still, some of them also migrate upon their own initiations and decisions without other's involvement. However, the young women themselves usually finish the remaining process once the need for migration and destination is agreed and the finance for brokerage and transportation to the capital is accomplished.

The migrants made use of networks in both their original place and destination to collect information, gain emotional support, safety net and accommodation. Their migration is found to have a mixed impact; while it helped them to economically be autonomous and attain freedom and some social positive gains, they also endure negative experiences.

Relevance to Development Studies

Migration and development affect one another. Migration can both unfavourably affect the development of countries and also promote their development. Migration can help alleviate poverty at the individual, household and national levels. Development policies, on the other hand, determine migration flows. So,

development can attract migration and lack of development in the origin countries necessitates migration.

The study on the decision-making processes has an implication on gender equality, one of the cross-cutting aspects of development, which in turn has an implication to development. The study of the young women's migration for domestic work, a sector which exposes the young women to different exploitations and harassments, is important to develop gender-specific solutions and policy directions. Migration also plays a role in transforming societies and contributes for multiculturalism.

Keywords

Chapter 1 Introduction

Driven by multitude of factors, migration has been source of human survival, livelihood and protection. Economic crisis, social factors and political factors contribute to the increasing human migration. People migrate internally or internationally by crossing borders for similar reason but maybe affected differently. Due to the change in the form of relationship between the developed and developing countries, the integration of the world system is growing. According to Jayasuriya and Opeskin (2015:581), significant differences of human development among countries contributes for much of the international migration since people in the developing countries find migrations to be an alternative or the only way for a better life.

In this globalized world, migration is increasingly becoming a "rising policy priority" affecting countries of origin, destinations, and transitions and as a combinations of all (ILO 2015: iii). According to UN (2017:4) the number of international migrants is increasing reaching 258 million in 2017, of which 48 percent were women. In 2015, international migration contributes to more than $601 billion remittance flows from which developing countries receive $441 billion, three times higher than the ODA flows (Ratha 2016: xii).

According to Boyd (1989:655-56) and Kofman (1999:274) research on international migration before the 1970s remained men focused and emphasized on the lived experiences of male migrants or migration in general in which women migrants were assumed to be part of family migration. Boyd and Grieco (2003 no page) disclosed that "migrants and their families" were used to mean "male migrants and their children and wives" in the 1960s and 70s making women invisible in the study of migration despite their huge presence.

Following the change in migration patterns and the feminization of labour migration, migration for domestic work received attention since the 1960s (Castles et al. 2013:16). This type of migration is particularly gendered with 83% of the total domestic workers worldwide being women and of the total 2.1 million domestic workers in the Middle East, 63% are women (Jayasuriya and Opeskin

2015:582). Domestic work is also an important source of employment. ILO reports that domestic work provides 1.7% of total global employment and 3.6% of all wage employment (ILO 2013:19).

The increasing demand from developed countries and the Middle East for domestic labour, poverty and unemployment in the place of origin, globalization, and the changing roles within the households, inter alia, contribute for the huge participation of women in the domestic work migration (de Regt 2010:240). The increased demand in the Middle East especially in the last two decades partly was the result of the governments' decision to support "state welfare systems" since the 1970s following the increase in oil revenues (Fernandez 2010:251). Consequently, the demand for labour and domestic workers increased since nationals did not want to do what they considered is a "dirty work" which includes domestic work (ibid: 251). Poverty coupled with limited livelihood alternatives in the sending countries force women to consider migration in response to family problems and personal fulfilments (Temin et al. 2013:26). Socio-cultural factors like gender norms and expectations, power relations, and inequality influence women's migration choices, decisions, and experiences (O'Neil et al. 2016:4).

In Ethiopia, the migration of women both internally and internationally has been also well noted notably after the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991. According to Mandefro (2012 no page), following the removal of exit visa in 1991, migration to the Middle East showed a significant increase. Before the 1991, though the Derg regime banned migration and closed its borders, sizable number of Ethiopians migrated irregularly due to political unrest and conflict (Ketema 2014:32). Mandefro also stated that Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Kuwait Jordan were the main destinations due to their geographic proximity and their demand for domestic workers with little or no education. According to Arab News (2018), when the Ethiopian government banned the regular domestic work migration to the Middle East in 2013, there were 460,000 workers. Yemen serves as the main transit for mainly irregular migrants.

1.1 The research statement

The research focuses on the decision-making process and negotiations within the family and community and influence of networks regarding the migration of young[1] Ethiopian women to the Middle East over the last ten years. For the young women, age, gender and socio-economic position (i.e. poverty) are crucial elements of their location in power hierarchies of the family and community. Patriarchal society may disempower them, but the family may need (that may be fulfilled by migration) to offer them a chance and the young women themselves want to rise in the power hierarchies. Thus, making a decision for the young women to migrate is never a simple process. The interplay of the above-mentioned factors has an implication in the empowerment of the young women and their capacity to define their life-chances.

Various researches have been done to investigate the plights of domestic work migration, the trends, trafficking, migration experiences and the process of reintegration of the returnee migrants but, to my knowledge, research on the decision-making dynamics is almost non-existent apart from some studies by de Regt (2016) and Grabska et al. (2018). Hence, this research seeks to explore the decision-making processes and power relations within the family and community, to understand how decisions about the migration of the young women to the Middle East are made, and what power relations, socio-economic factors, social norms and values have an implication on the decision of the women to migrate from Maichew town, Ethiopia.

1.2 Research question and sub-questions

The main research question of this paper is: what are the social relations of power, and gendered norms and values that influence decision-making processes regarding migration of the young Ethiopian women to the Middle East, and how they influence negotiations within the family, community and personal networks?

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[1] For the purpose of this research, refers to women aged 15 to 24, equivalent with the English concept of youth. In the community, there is one word i.e., "mena'esey" in Tigrigna (local language) or "wetatoch" in Amharic (national language) to mean young.

Specifically, the research paper addressed the following research sub-questions.

1. How gender, age and socio-economic situation of the family influence young women's ability to exercise agency in decision-making about their migration to the Middle East?
2. How gendered power hierarchies influence women's ability to exercise agency in decision-making about their migration to the Middle East?
3. What are the factors that empower young women's negotiating position within the family and community, and what is the role of networks in the negotiation and decision-making processes?

1.3 Contextualizing the problem

Women domestic workers' migration comes to occupy the attention of the international community and has become a global political issue for a while now. Despite dangers of human trafficking, hazardous work conditions and a subsequent psychological and physical injury, a large number of young women flow to the Middle East. Ethiopia has become a potential source country for women domestic workers to the Middle East especially after 1991. The flow of the Ethiopian girls to the Middle East continues although reports of abuse and exploitation dominates the media (Busza et al. 2017:1).

After the February 24, 2012 incident of Alem Dechasa who was filmed being physically abused by her labour recruiter and later committed suicide in Beirut (HRW 2012) which left many Ethiopians angered, another horrific event happened to Tadessech Sadiq when she fell from the 7th floor to escape a threat of death by her employer in Kuwait in 2017. Though she survived the incident in what is considered by many as a miracle, she suffered many injuries (Demissie 2018:1). From Tadessech's interview with an Ethiopian late-night show (Seifu on EBS) on 10 December 2017, the event was filmed by her employer and she distributed it in Facebook and other social media outlets. Furthermore, Beydoun (2006:1019) revealed that 67 incidences of suicide of Ethiopian women domestic workers appeared as headlines in Newspapers in Lebanon alone between 1997-1999. Despite all these evidences, the young women continue migrating to the Middle East for a better living although the government stopped the legal route for a while in October 2013 (Fernandez 2017:243, IOM 2017:6) but resumed it

in October 2018 (MoLSA 2018). The number of Ethiopian women migrants in the Middle East through the legal route was estimated to be more than 200,000 in 2012 and the number of young women migrating through the irregular route is believed to be double of the above figure (Ketema 2014:2).

This is also the case in the town where the study was conducted. The migration of young women is a recent phenomenon but knocking at doors of every family or household. Migration to the Middle East among the young women is becoming a "culture" in Maichew especially after 2007 following the success of some migrants. The community does not see the migration to the Middle East as detrimental to the mental and physical wellbeing of the young women but as an important source of livelihood. Consequently, the young women and their parents do not hesitate to seek the service of the brokers and use the irregular route, knowingly or otherwise of the plights that they may face.

The intersection of age, low rates of higher education completion, lack of employment opportunities, poverty, and societal norms are drivers of their migration. Ethiopia's economy is dominated by agriculture, which generates 85% of the employment and shares 45% of the country's GDP while industry contributes only 10% of the employment (Ministry of Education 2014:7). However, the agricultural sector is dominated by men due to women's disadvantageous position in terms of access and control to resources. As confirmed by Ogato (2013:364), "Ethiopian women are poor often lacking productive assets particularly land, and are underserved with agricultural extension, credit, labour, oxen and farm implements" and women constitute only 18.6% of the total land holders, due to customary norms and values. Furthermore, there are much less women than men employed in the industry and service sectors while they dominated the non-professional and low paying jobs due to reasons like "low level education and training, lack of exposure to the business world, meagre financial and human capital and problems related to ownership rights for collateral purposes" and they constitute only 32% of the employment in the civil service (Ogato 2013:364). In general, women are worse off in terms of employment in which there are 43.4% unemployed young women, much higher than the unemployment of men (de Regt 2016:12).

Despite the post 1991 efforts by the government to ensure gender equality, Ethiopia is far behind from achieving it. Apart from falling in the low human development index category, Ethiopia's gender-related development index value for 2015 was 0.842, making Ethiopia among the countries with low equality in HDI achievements between men and women (UNDP 2016: no page). So, these all factors in combination with the shift by the Middle Eastern countries in demand of cheap labour from Ethiopia, the expansion of agencies and importantly networks intensify the migration to the Middle East (Zewdu 2018:14).

The study of networks has been an integral part of research starting from the 1960s. The role of family and friends in providing information and facilitating migration was analysed in the 1960s and 1970s and the role of social networks in the causes, direction, and composition of migration was studied in the 1980s (Boyd 1989:639).

Social networks play a vital role in connecting migrants between sending and receiving communities. Majority of the Ethiopian population (84%) lives in rural areas, where information about what is happening to the young women and migrants in general is quite limited, and where people are predominantly illiterate (female illiteracy rate 40%; male illiteracy rate 60% in 2011) (de Regt 2016:11). Families who lead or negotiate decisions about the journey, jobs, and, salary of their daughters often have limited or false information from the PEAs or traffickers. Moreover, families pay for the brokerage and the journey. Pressure from family members due to poverty coupled with unemployment of the young women often forces both the women and the family to look migration as the viable alternative source of livelihood (Boyd 1989:642). Ethiopia is one of the poorest nations in the world despite more than a decade of fastest economic growth with 8.5% annual GDP growth in 2017 (World Bank 2018: no page); IMF ranked Ethiopia among the five fastest growing economies in the world (de Regt 2016:12). However, with (based on purchasing power parity) GDP per capita of USD 2,161 in 2017 (IMF 2018: no page), Ethiopia is ranked 174 in 2015 out of 188 countries with HDI value of 0.448 (UNDP 2016:24). But there are also instances where the young women decide to migrate without consulting their family (de Regt 2016:5). The evidences revealed by returnees interviewed by de Regt (2016:5) and Grabska et al. (2018:103) in Ethiopia shows that poverty, abuse at home (especially by stepfathers or mothers), early marriage, lack

of educational and job opportunities and aspiration to continue their education are some of the drivers of the young women's migration.

Returnee neighbours and friends of the young women also participate in the "recruitment, transportation, and employment of victims" (ILO 2011: ix). In addition, young women are also motivated by the "success" of the returnees looking at the small businesses they own and the help they extend to their family.

Following the October 2013 ban on the legal route by the Ethiopian government, the irregular route becomes the option for many of the young women and "use services of smugglers and illegal brokers to migrate abroad for work" (IOM 2017:6). Accordingly, the number of the domestic workers with irregular status in Gulf outnumbers those legal ones. Fernandez (2017:246), citing the estimates of MoLSA, revealed that about 60%-70% or 300,000-350,000 Ethiopian women domestic workers were known to have an irregular status while those legal ones are estimated to be 30%-40%. Furthermore, 78% of the total 107, 532 migrants from the Horn of Africa who arrived in Yemen in 2012 alone were Ethiopians and 54,213 Ethiopians arrived in Yemen as of December 2013 (RMMS 2014:35). Recruiting agencies or local brokers who operate in the neighbourhoods promise the young women of fair pay and good working conditions which later happen to be false (Fernandez 2011:433). The participation of the illegal brokers has increased after the government revised the Private Employment Agency Proclamation 104/1998 in 2009 in which USD 30,000 was made to be the minimum bond prerequisite for private agencies to get a license to place 500 workers (Fernandez 2013:819). The 2009 proclamation doubled the bond requirements and made the PEAs responsible to provide shelter to the migrants in the destination countries and liable in case of contract violations. But this has resulted in the making of the former licensed PEAs either out of the market or becoming illegal firms (ILO 2011:34). This was made evident in Addis Ababa where the number of the PEAs reduced to 54 in 2010 (ILO 2011:34) from 110 in 2009 (Fernandez 2013:820). Besides, irregular status can be due to other causes and "does not necessarily imply irregular entry" (Fernandez 2017:247). For instance, many young Ethiopian Muslim women enter Saudi Arabia legally in the name of Haj and Umrah pilgrimage visas "but overstay their visas and become irregular" (Fernandez 2017:247). This is especially common among those who have relatives and friends to hide from the police.

Besides, Ethiopia is a signatory, but has not ratified the Trafficking protocol, the human trafficking governing entity established to supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Beydoun 2006:1021-22). Simultaneously, MoLSA facilitates the public migration, one of the routes of migration in addition to the registered PEAs and illegal brokers, by registering young Ethiopian women though they secure work abroad through their personal contacts (Fernandez 2010:251). According to Beydoun (2006:1010), no meaningful measure has been taken either by the Ethiopian government or any international human rights bodies to stop it. Sending and receiving governments also play their respective roles by entering in to bilateral agreements to facilitate migration flows (Boyd 1989:647).

Chapter 2 Theoretical framing of the research

This research is informed by the household strategies theory and gender perspectives on migration decision-making process. According to this theory, migration is a result of collective decision to maintain a balance between the household resources and the consumption patterns of its members including the search for an alternative source of livelihood (Boyd 1989:645, Chant 1998:9, Massey 1990:9). As Hoang (2011:1443) argues, gender is an important element in framing migration as a household strategy and the gendered division of labour and the unequal power relationships within the household determine who should migrate. Thus, this research takes gender as the central analytical concept. Embedded in strong gender social norms and values, gender roles or gender division of labour are clearly demarcated in Ethiopia in which men are the bread-winners while women are perceived to excel in reproductive household activities. Since the domestic work women do in the Middle East is believed by families and communities as the extension of household activities they perform at home and is the job that majority of them migrate for, the idea that female members of the household should migrate to be domestic workers in the Middle East is less contested. These gender norms, identities, ideologies and division of labour affect the migration decision-making power of the women. Gender here is understood as those attributes of men and women like ideologies, norms, identities, roles, and relationships between men and women that are socially constructed, and are fluid, dynamic, time and context specific. Gender is important to explain how men and women move differently and it serves as "theoretical and methodological toolbox" to understand how mobility is affected by the socio-cultural and historical relations between men and women (Elliot 2016:76). The role of gender as a determining factor in the migration decision-making process varies across cultures. For example, gender relationships, what Ann Whitehead called "gender ascriptive" (1979:11), in one community are used to describe the position women (and men) occupy and this, I believe has an implication in the assignment of duties within the household and community depending on their position as mothers/daughters or fathers/sons. Therefore, women as daughters and mothers, are expected to do household chores like cleaning, cooking, fetching water, taking care of children and other activities within the home setting.

Besides, the gender relations prevailing in the community have an implication in the distribution of power, spaces and resources within the community and may result in women subordination, sex-segregation (the public-private sphere worlds), and ascribing different abilities, desires, personality traits, etcetera to men and women. Hence, the inclusion of gender in the analysis is quite important as gender influences every dimension of domestic work migration.

Naila Kabeer's (1999) understanding of power as "the ability to make choices" and disempowerment as the denial of choices is used as a lens to analyse the research questions. Labour migration has both empowering and disempowering effects on the migrants. Besides, I also argue that the need to have the necessary resources motivates the young women to migrate so that they can make choices without relying on the resources and consent of their parents, siblings, husbands and others. The intersection of age, poverty, gender, patriarchy put women at a disadvantageous position and consequently women remain disempowered. These various categories and identities expose women to inequalities/oppression and an intersectionality-based analysis is important in providing solutions to issues of social injustices by challenging the existing hegemonic gender relations (see Bastia 2014; Crenshaw 1991; Nash 2008).

Kabeer sees empowerment and disempowerment as related and she understands empowerment as the "process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability" (Kabeer 1999:437). Importantly, Kabeer discussed the idea of empowerment with regard to three interrelated dimensions: "resources", "agency", and "achievements" (Kabeer 1999:437). Resources include socio-economic and human resources, actually possessed or future claims, important to help women make choices and their access depends on the rules and norms that govern their distribution and exchange and "these rules and norms give certain actors authority over others in determining the principles of distribution and exchange" (Kabeer 1999:437). She conceptualizes agency as "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them" and appears in the form of "negotiation and manipulation, subversion and resistance…" (Kabeer 1999:438).

Chapter 3 Methodology and research ethics

This chapter presents the methods of data collection employed and the process through which the respondents were located and accessed. In addition, the challenges faced during the fieldwork, research ethical guidelines applied and the way data were analysed are discussed.

3.1 Methods: participation, observation, listening and interacting

Migration decision-making happens in a specific socio-cultural and economic context and is influenced by the restraints imposed by these factors and the migrant's perceptions, values and attitudes. Migration decision-making is complex since different actors with varying degree of involvement influence it. Hence, I used semi-structured interview as a major approach to study how decision is made and to identify the actors and factors that influence the decision-making process in Maichew town. But considering the difficulty of studying migration decision-making, the semi-structured interview was supplemented by the analyses of the socio-cultural and economic environments on which such process happens and the actors/persons involved in the decision-making. Hence, participant-observation and informal chats with parents, siblings, and other community members were also made to have an insight on migration decision-making happens in the study area. Participant observation, according to Guest et al. (2012:75), "connects the researcher to the most basic of human experiences, discovering through immersion and participation the hows and whys of human behaviour in a particular context." However, studying migration decision-making is difficult and hence the above data collection methods are not sufficient to capture the real image of the decision-making process and as Grabska et al. (2018:90) emphasized "one-time interviews" fall short of the potential to discover the complex decision-making processes.

Besides, data were collected from mainly the returnee migrants in which the participation of other actors like parents, siblings, brokers, agencies and others who are believed to have a huge impact in the decision-making processes was limited or absent due to some inconveniencies. Importantly, interviews were

conducted after the decision has already made where it is difficult for the respondents to exactly describe the motive and decision-making process.

The fieldwork was conducted from July 5 to August 18, 2018, for a total of 54 days including observation and informal chats with the aim of gaining sufficient data. During that time, I conducted informal chats with community members, participant observation during events like religious feasts including *Mahbers*[2], *Idir*[3] meetings, and other community gatherings like *Debo*[4]. The informal chats with community members and participant observation were important to understand the perception of the community about migration to the Middle East. The chats and the observation were unstructured as this is flexible and important to jot down notes that I considered are important and relevant for my research. Since I am from the community and lived with them during the fieldwork, it was easy for me to immerse in the socio-cultural fabrics of the community and to access the young women and other people who helped me to locate the returnee migrants.

Interviews with the returnee migrants, parents and people who influence their migration plans were conducted during this time. The interviews with the parents (5 mothers) were conducted in their homes having coffee while the mothers doing their household activities. It was challenging for me to win the mother's free time since they were busy with their household activities and agricultural tasks like weeding; hence the interview was interrupted on several occasions. Interviews with siblings and other family members were held in different settings like workplaces, coffee-houses, and while walking in the outskirts of the town. Interviews with the returnee migrants too were held at different locations after I asked for their choice of place. Interviews with those who are married were conducted in their homes though I wanted to make it outside of the homes just to avoid interruptions from kids and neighbours and to maintain attention on the interview. Some of the interviews were done in the migrants' shops while they accommodate their clients. Furthermore, I also conducted interviews in

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[2] *Mahabers* are religious associations of 12 people in honour of Saints each month in rotation.

[3] *Idir* means an association of people who meet each month to raise money to be used during emergencies like death and to participate during mourning.

[4] *Debo* refers to a self-help group of people to conduct social responsibilities in group during weeding, house construction.

coffee-houses while enjoying traditional Ethiopian coffee. The interview guide was semi-structured and informal as it enabled me to have fruitful interaction with all the interviewees. Through the course of each individual interview, follow-up questions were asked following the participants' responses. Sometimes the language of some of the interview questions that I considered are sensitive was changed or rephrased.

Since I knew only two returnee migrants (they are my relatives and neighbours, when starting the fieldwork) I preferred to use snowball sampling to avoid the difficulty of accessing the returnee migrants. This method helped me to be part of the social network and secure the cooperation vital to locate and access the young women willing to be interviewed. According to Noy (2008:330), snowball sampling helps the researcher "accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants."

All the interviews with the returnee migrants were made in the presence of my female colleagues and other friends of mine to avoid societal misgiving and to make the young women feel secure and comfortable during the interview. In the community, it is suspicious to see married and unmarried young women with young men. Cognizant of this fact, the idea to conduct the interview in the presence of friends especially female colleagues was initiated by me and the young women themselves. The two female colleagues who escorted me in many of the interviews were Fantanesh and Meaza who were working with me in Arba Minch University since 2014. Meaza transferred to Mekelle University later in 2017. Fantanesh was in her summer break when I met her during the fieldwork time. Abadi is another friend of mine who was with me during the fieldwork. He, together with Fantanesh and Meaza, helped me avoid the suspicion from the community and reluctance from the young women. Because the young women wanted me to be escorted by my friends and some of them reminded me to notify their partners. Against my expectation that the young women may decline some questions related with, for example, sexual violence during their journey and family affairs before their migration, the interview was held openly and in a friendly way. The interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes.

After I made them clear that, though it was challenging to convince them at first, the interview is exclusively for academic purpose, all my interviewees

allowed me to audio-record the interviews. I did also take notes in my notebook. Knowing that I am an insider researching my own community, I preferred to approach the issue and ask the respondents ignorantly. Since I grew up in the community and know the culture, my worry was how to avoid influencing the respondents and the analysis. To avoid what Unluer called "role duality" when researchers' role as insiders and researchers conflict (Unluer 2012:2), I tried to avoid all my assumptions and previous knowledge about the issue by emptying my mind. Unluer (2012:1) added that greater familiarity with the community and making wrong and unconscious assumptions based on this familiarity can affect objectivity. Nevertheless, my being insider was so helpful to conduct the field-work without requiring a special research permit and avoid any misunderstanding during the interview for sharing the same language. Currently, the issue of security is a top priority in Ethiopia where inspection among passengers and strangers has become tighter following the recent political unrest. Hence, my being an insider relieved me from being suspected as a stranger and conduct my fieldwork easily though I underwent several inspections. But since I am a bearer of the local identity card, I did not face any complicated security issue that can be an obstacle for the fieldwork. The whole interview session was made in the presence of female colleagues and friends due to my position as an unmarried young man interviewing mainly young women in a community that has an intact concern for norms. Though their presence was welcomed by the young women, some of the young women sometimes were unwilling to address some of the interview questions related with, for example, their family's economic condition. I preferred to rephrase the questions or change the language to get the required information from the respondents.

It is also important to confess that I thought my position as an Ethiopian student in a Western University would influence my respondents in accepting my request for the interview. However, the young women asked me series of questions concerning who I am, why I am doing the research, what is the purpose of the research, and whether I am from the government and whether I would pay them.

3.2 The process of locating and accessing the respondents

Thanks to Meaza[5] and Roman whom I contacted first, the task of locating and accessing my respondents was easier. After spending 12 days on informal chats and participant observation, I contacted Roman and Meaza and they introduced me to Lemlem who migrated to Saudi Arabia and agreed to meet me in her small shop. Roman and Meaza also took me to a bakery owned by another returnee, Hyab. Hyab agreed be interviewed and introduced me to her returnee friend, Sesen on the phone. Hyab asked Sesen for her will after telling who I am and the aim of the interview. Though she was not willing at first, I interviewed her in her small boutique in the presence of Hyab and my female colleague. Hyab also called to another friend, Trhas, who runs a mini-market and informed her that I want her for an interview. Trhas responded to my quest positively. Trhas in her own introduced me to Sara who worked with her in Saudi Arabia and returned six months after Trhas. Sara, who migrated through the irregular route, agreed to sit with me for not more than 60 minutes for the interview. After this, I was troubled because my previous contacts could not help me locate other potential respondents. However, when I sat for the interview with Sara, I told her that I am still looking for other returnee migrants. In the middle of our interview, she recollected that she knows a young woman returned from Saudi Arabia. We both started to look for people who know her and her telephone number. Sara accidentally called to Almaz, a mutual friend, and gave Sara the telephone number of the returnee. Sara called Alem who was also migrated irregularly and learned that Alem works in a coffee-house. Sara proposed that it is better to go to the coffee-house and talk to Alem in person. Alem agreed to the interview on one condition. She wanted me to explain to her fiancé that I wanted Alem for an interview and the place to be in her coffee-house. Alem also introduced me to Selam and Fiqr who both agreed to cooperate after a short explanation by me and Alem. Two days later, while visiting a friend in a hospital, I met other visitors who have an acquaintance with me. I told them that I am doing fieldwork and looking for returnee domestic workers from the Middle East. One of the visitors, Tesfay, told me that he will introduce me to a returnee

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[5] All the names of the young women are invented ones.

15

who is taking an engineering course at a technical college with him. After fixing a convenient day, he introduced me to Melat. Melat agreed to be interviewed and called her returnee friend, Meseret, whom I interviewed at her residence.

I also conducted a phone interview with Akeza, currently working in Qatar. I was able to reach her through Meaza, my first interviewee. Akeza migrated to Qatar for the second time after working in a boutique she opened after her first migration. I interviewed her on IMO[6] audio-calling for 35 minutes.

Besides to interviewing Roman and Meaza, I was also able to interview their elder brothers who influence their decision together with their parents. I also interviewed Alem's elder sister who works as a teller in one of the government banks in the town.

Meaza also gave me the telephone number of one of the local brokers, Belay[7], in the community who facilitated her migration to Oman. I called him and told him that I want to interview him about his role and how the selection of the young women takes place. At first, he refused and hang up on me. The next day, I called him using a different number and told him that I am a student doing a research project. I also promised that I will meet him alone. He rejected me fearing that I may be a policeman when he told me later. I went back to Meaza and requested her to explain my case. He wanted me to show anything that can prove that I am a student. I showed him my student card and agreed to meet him in his parent's home. Belay is 35 years old and works for six years as a broker in the community. He is also a broker for house, car buyers and sellers.

Overall, I interviewed thirteen young women, five parents, one broker, three siblings and Meaza's husband. Of the thirteen returnees, six are now married (Meaza, Roman, Alem, Hyab, Akeza and Melat) while the rest are unmarried. Meaza who was 17 years old at the time of her migration to Oman now has one child and Roman gave birth to twin baby boys in 2017 at the age of 25. Alem married to a high school teacher and was a seven-month pregnant at the time of interview and she migrated at the age of 18 while Akeza gave birth to a baby boy

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[6] IMO is "a multi-platform free instant messaging product for the web and mobile devices" (source: https://techcrunch.com/2012/01/16/instant-messaging-service-imo-im-launches-real-time-social-network/?guccounter=1)

7 The name is invented.

in 2015 one year after her return from UAE. Akeza went back to Qatar in 2017. Of the thirteen participants, only three, Sara, Melat and Melat, migrated through the irregular route.

3.3 Challenges and obstacles faced during the fieldwork

Before conducting all the interviews, I thought doing an interview would not be very difficult. After I read some interview guidelines, I was confident that I can handle the interview process easily. However, I was forced to repeat my first interview since I thought it was poorly handled and did not help me acquire the needed information. However, it gave me lessons that were helpful for the rest of my interview sessions. When I proposed interview as a data collection tool from returnee young women, I was aware that I am going to a culture where the meeting of a man with a woman, especially if they are alone, is viewed as a violation of norms and a disrespect. This is especially serious if the woman is married or has a fiancé or boyfriend. This was reflected when I told people of my plan to interview young women, they expressed their frustration that it would be difficult for me to handle it. Consequently, I relied on my former female colleagues and male friends during the whole process of the interview. If you are in a group, the belief is that you are doing something good related to social life, education or business[8].

Convincing some of the young women that the information they will give me is exclusively for academic purpose challenged me most during the fieldwork. It took me long to finally convince them and seek their willingness to be interviewed. I had to make sure that they wholeheartedly believe me what I am explaining them. I sought the support of my friends, their relatives whom I know, and their returnee friends in persuading. Another complicated challenge that has also an ethical implication was whether I should pay some of the respondents who openly asked me for a payment. I was sandwiched between maintaining the ethical aspect and paying money and get the information I want. However, as Messias and Dejoseph (2004:45) clearly put it, paying money in exchange for an information never helps solve the dilemma. Besides, I sought the help of friends

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[8] Informal chat with my mother and other elderly neighbours.

to persuade the returnees to unreservedly cooperate and give me the right information without paying them. Furthermore, it challenges me to approach some the respondents with my true identity; that I am a researcher. Some of the young women hesitated to believe and considered me a government representative who is collecting information about returnee migrants and register them for a job or give them a piece of land for their business. In an interview with Meaza, I learned that people from the municipality surveyed them several times to organize them in groups and give them a working place. My female colleague even advised me to present myself as someone from the municipality and grab the information. After I explained that it is unethical to do so, and informants should voluntarily participate in research with a full knowledge of related risks and benefits, we discussed on how to explain that my goal has nothing to do with what they said. Eventually, I managed to persuade the participants that I am a researcher.

Another method of data collection that I wanted to employ was focus group discussion to gather an in-depth information about the thoughts and opinions of the young women. Focus group discussion gains researchers an in-depth data about the participant's views on a given topic where participants have the chance to talk with other participants with similar experiences or backgrounds which is important to generate new ideas (Bryman 2016:502). However, I did not conduct the discussion as 10 of the young women declined my request. The reason they provided was that they do not have time to sit for the discussion.

Besides, my plan was to interview a number of parents parallel with the young women. However, I interviewed only five parents (mothers). Some refused to cooperate even after I sent my mother to talk to them that I need their support for the success of my fieldwork. Also, I found it impossible to interview more than one brokers who are believed to be the main actors in the domestic work migration network in the area for several reasons. Firstly, I could not locate them meaning I could not access them and secondly nobody including the young women were willing to tell me where I can find them. There is no legally registered broker or agency in the town i.e., all the brokers in the area are irregular who contact the young women, their parents or anybody whom they believe can

financially help the migrants, but the brokers are important in providing information about jobs and other related issues[9].

3.4 Data analysis

This stage of the research is important to make the data collected manageable so that it will become easy to interpret and to make sense of it by, for example, thematising the textual material gathered.

All the interviews conducted were audio-recorded and transcribed before I translated into English (the interview guide was prepared in Tigrigna) after checking for the presence of flaws within the raw data. Then the transcripts were coded, or the raw data were broken down into component parts and translations were revised for correctness and grammar. The coding of the transcripts was important to identify themes based on the research questions and points raised during the interviews. Initially, many themes were identified. However, those themes with fewer data were omitted. Each theme is analysed by providing data and empirical evidences and importantly they are augmented by direct quotations from the respondents' words.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Research ethical guidelines together with "ethical conscience" serve as a framework and help researchers make ethical decisions to address "dilemmas" from an "informed position" and help researchers win the permission to do their research (Dench et al. 2004: vii-viii). Developing research ethical guidelines maximizes societal benefits and minimize harms. Hence, informed-consent rules were prioritized to ensure that informants are voluntarily taking part in the research with a full knowledge of related risks and benefits. The purpose of the research, duration and procedures of the interview were explained to the participants prior to the interview. Participants were also informed of their rights to decline a request to participate or withdraw once the research is started.

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9 Interview with the young women.

Besides, the right of the participants to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity were respected and consent was requested to audio record. Though the participants allowed me to use their true names for the analysis, pseudonyms are used to avoid any unexpected consequences on them though this may not entirely avoid the possibility of identification of the respondents. Bryman (2016:136) expressed that "it is very difficult, though by no means impossible, to present field notes and interview transcripts in a way that will prevent people and places from being identified."

The participants were explained the limits of confidentiality (informing them how the data will be used and the audio recordings will be applied). Utmost care was given to ensure the security of any sensitive information that the young women gave; it is stored in a password protected email-address and google drive. I took female colleagues, other female relatives and male friends to the interview sessions to make the young women feel comfortable (to build trust) and to avoid the suspicion of the community if I met the interviewees alone. Hence, due to my positionality as a member of the community, young single man interviewing young women, I was aware of the challenges that I may face during the interview period though my being member of the community was an opportunity for me to avoid the difficulty of accessing the respondents and to easily conduct the research without requiring a special research permit and avoid the possibility of misunderstanding during the interview for sharing the same language.

Chapter 4 Current debates in the literature

In this chapter, different contending theories about migration decision-making and the relationship among gender, migration and agency during the decision-making processes are reviewed. Further review of academic literature on the empowering and disempowering effects of migration on the young women and the role of networks in the decision-making processes has been done.

4.1 Migration and decision-making: theoretical debates

Various migration theories provide explanations on why people migrate. People migrate either within their home countries or by crossing borders for various reasons, often in order to change their individual life or to help their family survive. However, as Massey et al. (1993:432) pointed out that there is no one and well-organized theory that explains migration adequately but different set of theories that developed separately. Bakewell (2010:1692) discloses that the disagreement between the proponents of agency-structure debate prevents the attempts to develop a coherent theory of migration.

The result of the analysis of scientific literature indicates that there are many theories of migration developed so far important to shed light on what motivates people to migrate and how migration decisions are made. As Massey (1990:3-4) indicates, intellectual disputes among the various theories have been observed concerning several points. Time dimension of migration, whether or not migration should be studied as something developed at one point in time (cross-sectional) or as evolved through time, is the first point of difference. Another point of disagreement among the theories is whether or not migration implies the aggregate individual decisions or is a result of "powerful structural changes" that supplant individual decisions. The third dissension stems from the belief of the proponents of each theory about the unit of analysis; while some argue that individuals are at the centre of decision-making process where they exercise their agency in deciding to migrate, others argue that migration decision-making should be considered as a group tactic for "sustenance and socio-economic improvement" (Massey 1990:3-4). The last conflict is about the relative attention

each author puts on the causes and consequences of migration: some claim that migration is motivated by job creation, others argue that migration brings employment, still others contend that "migration and employment reciprocally cause each other" (Massey (1990:3-4).

Among all the theoretical models offered by migration theory, one suiting this research best is the household strategies model. This model takes family/household as the unit of analysis in the process of migration decision-making. It advances the idea that migration decisions are always made by households/families, not by the autonomous individuals. Based on the decision made at the household/family level, the individual migrates for the collective benefit of households/families and hence migration is seen as "family strategy" (Haug 2008:587).

In contrary to the individual cost-benefit analysis model that takes wage differentials as the determining factor (considered by the rational individual actor that demonstrates the individual's agency and power to decide to migrate), the household strategies model maintains that families/households want to avert risks and diversify sources of livelihood of their family and decide who should migrate. In doing so, gender is central in the decision-making in which the household members decide whether there is a need for migration, who in the family should migrate and what resources are needed, what benefits (e.g. remittance) the household can gain, and the duration of migration. Gender roles and power hierarchies within the household guide these decisions (Pedraza 1991:308). Massey (1990) rejects the assumption of the individual cost-benefit model where individuals decide in isolation and argues that social networks link people with each other and these interactions make migration less risky, proving migration as viable source of livelihood of the household (Curray and Saguy 2001:59). The individual cost-benefit analysis theory is criticized by feminists for failing to consider the gender power relations that may have an effect during the decision-making process. Nawyn (2010:752) explains that this theory "conceptualizes migrants as purely rational actors embedded in social contexts devoid of gendered power relations."

Another theory important to explain migration decision-making is the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). According to De Jong (2000:309), though the

individual cost-benefit and household strategies theories are used to explain migration decision-making process at individual and family level, both fall short of capturing other important aspects of the dynamics of deciding to migrate. Kley (2017:35) asserts that though facilitators and constraints have an important role in migration research, their impact in each stage of migration process is hardly studied. Gubhaju and De Jong (2009:34) and De Jong (2000:309) believe that intentions to migrate are also important components of research on migration decision-making and the theory of planned behaviour which conceptualizes intentions as the primary determinant of behaviour, serves as the theoretical justification for many researchers in this regard. Kley (2017:36) noted that TPB argues that "intentions are the products of beliefs that one will attain valued goals as a consequence of a certain action, like migration." The application of the theory of planned behaviour into migration decision-making is based on the assumption that intentions to migrate determine migration behaviour coupled with behavioural constraining and facilitating factors and hence the expectations to attain valued goals between the destination and the source community are always contrasted and the combination of expectations and valued goals shape the motivation for migration (De Jong 2000:309). Like the individual cost-benefit theory, this theory too is gender blind; I could not able to discover its gender dimension in my attempt to read as enough as possible literature about this theory.

In general, as already noted the migration theories are criticised of ignoring gender and associate migration with male migrants or genderless migration where women's presence remained invisible (Boyd and Grieco 2003:no page).

4.2 Migration, gender and agency

The discussion on migration, gender and agency is vital in explaining the migration decision-making process. Different theories of migration characterize the migration decision-making process differently in which some of them tend to focus on the agency of the migrants [e.g. cost-benefit model] by ignoring or giving little attention to the of various social structures while others emphasize on the social structures [e.g. household strategies model] that influence migration decisions and others still try to find a middle ground between structure and agency and base their argument on Anthony Giddens's structuration theory (Bakewell 2010:1690).

23

Kabeer (1999:438) understands agency as the "ability to define one's goals and act upon them" and is beyond making decisions. It also denotes individual's capacity to negotiate, bargain, resist, and challenge what might be imposed up on them. She also clarifies that agency may positively (power within) or negatively (power over) relate to power in which the former implies people's attempt to achieve their own goals even when during opposition from others while the latter comes when people try to overrule other's agency.

The discussion on agency-structure has a relevance to the gendered domestic work migration to the Middle East. This research explored whether the Ethiopian young women exercise their agency when migrating or decisions are being imposed on them by their household members considering the intersection of gender, age, patriarchy, poverty, and other social norms that may restrict their agency. The prevailing social norms and the individual's gender identity influence migration decisions and experiences. My personal experience as part of my community helped me grasp the fact that the clear gender role demarcation and stereotypical views concerning women's position in the family and community in Ethiopia and in the study area, which attribute domestic work to women and public and productive work to men determine the decisions around migration, and the type of work female migrants should be recruited for. Traditionally, the gendered structure of labour market in the public sphere confined women to household activities. The belief that potency and power are the qualities of men reduce women to domestic work while men are privileged to participate in public jobs. To this end, the young women have become the main targets of the domestic labour recruiters, and domestic work migration of women to the Middle East is now seen as the best alternative source of living among young women (Ketema 2014:39) as many of the young women are either unemployed or can take low-paid jobs in the informal economy including domestic work within Ethiopia and sex work (Grabska et al. 2018:58-9).

These socio-economic gendered conditions of the young women and their families have a clear implication in the decision-making ability of women to determine their life chances including migration. Hoang's (2011:1450) study in Vietnam indicates that the varying positions men and women occupy within the household or community determine how they opt to act in the household deci-

sion-making process in which women cannot make migration decisions independently, but they seek consent from their household members including husbands, if they are married.

Hoang (2011:1441) identifies that migration decision-making in Vietnam as "consensual" though this does not indicate that migration was equally in the best interest of everyone. Hoang further claims that "women's agency around their own migration was in part constrained because they were forced to negotiate for their interests whilst trying to preserve family harmony" (Hoang 2011:1441).

4.3 Migration and women's empowerment

The analysis of the relation between women migration and the issue of empowerment is important to analyse the degree of the women's decision-making ability when migrating as members of a family and a larger community. The assumption is that if women are empowered in all aspects, they have the power to independently decide in favour of their well-being and advantage and challenge household migration decisions that is perhaps imposed on them. As Amartya Sen states empowerment also means the avoidance of socio-economic and political barriers (or the expansion of capabilities) so that women can decide independently on issues affecting their lives and positively affect the lives of others surrounding them.

Efforts to empower women in the developing world including Ethiopia is a major concern and has become a major indicator of development and a manifestation of women's status in a society which in turn determines their access to socio-economic and political opportunities. As Sinha et al. (2012:61) show that low level of women empowerment has an implication not only to the women but also to the family and community they are in and vice versa. Sen clearly puts that:

> The expansion of women's capabilities not only enhances women's own freedom and well-being, but also has many other effects on the lives of all. An enhancement of women's active agency can, in many circumstances, contribute substantially to the lives of all people - men as well as women, children as well as adults (Sen 2001:no page).

Though it is undeniable that remittances by women migrants help alleviate poverty of their families and contribute to the economic development of their

countries, debate dominates the study of women's migration about its empowering effects to women, implying that migration can be source of empowerment or disempowerment (Piper and Yamanaka 2005:4-5; Yu 2007:12). Piper and Yamanaka (2005:4) maintained that the feminized and gendered migration in the East and South East Asia region paves the way for gender inequality which in turn leads to "a new kind of inequality and injustice" and contributes to the continuation of the existing gender discrimination due to the intersection of ethnicity, nationality, social class and other identities. They, on the other hand, clarified that transnational labour migration empowers women as it enables them to have access to resources and power that they would not have accessed them in their home countries. Yu (2007:13) furthered the discussion and said that women migration is associated with exploitation and discrimination and the media "victimizes migrant women." Hugo as cited in Yu (2007) indicated gendered migration perpetuates the subordinate position of women and described the migration of women as the movement from "one household-based patriarchal to another in which their status is no better or even worse than at the origin" so their migration fails to liberate them from the patriarchy at home (Yu 2007). To the contrary, in a study by Handapangoda (2014) in Sri Lanka, one of the interviewees revealed that "migration changed my life and it was for the good…. Now, I have self-confidence as I can face any challenge in life" (Handapangoda 2014:357).

Yu (2007:14) emphasizes on the narratives by the women migrants themselves to evaluate the empowering effects of migration and indicated that 90% of Filipino migrants (by referring to a fieldwork by Oishi in 2005) agreed that migration brings them a boost to their confidence despite all the oppression and harassment they passed through. In Handapangoda's (2014) study, four other interviewees claimed that their migration to the Middle East increases their decision-making power and access to productive resources like money, but they weren't empowered adequately vis-a-vis their access to resources especially in terms of the control they have over the resources.

Chapter 5 Discussion and analysis

This chapter presents the discussion and analysis part in which the factors that influence the young women's migration to the Middle East and the decision-making processes, the young women's agency in relation to the factors, the role of networks and the effects of migration on the migrants are discussed in detail. In doing so, an attempt is made to support the data with a review of both theoretical and empirical evidences.

5.1 Gender, age and socio-economic situation of the family vis-à-vis agency in decision-making

This section discusses gender, age, and socio-economic situation of the migrants' families in sequence and the impact they have on the migrant's agency when deciding to migrate. Migration decision-making may be voluntary or forced due to natural and socio-economic factors and may involve varying degrees of choice and agency. People migrate in response to social problems including oppressive norms and discrimination (Birchall 2016:15), natural factors like drought, other economic and political problems. The interviews with the young women in Maichew town show that young women migrate to the Middle East in a variety of ways to do domestic and care works. The main reason for their migration is an economic reason though others also migrate due to different reasons i.e., conflict with parents and fascination by the "success" returnee migrants achieved. The young women made use of both the regular and irregular ways to migrate to the Middle East. In both cases, brokers in their original place and agencies in the capital facilitate their journey.

All the respondents confirmed that they take-up cleaning, vacuuming, cooking, laundry, and caregiving. Interviews show that some of them do multiple duties while others do any of the above activities for up to eighteen hours daily. The brokers and sending agencies provide women who are young (predominantly unmarried) to their respective clients. Young women dominate the migration for economic purposes (domestic-work) though some men also migrate but for a different job. The interviews show that the migration of the young

women as domestic workers to the Middle East is the result of the intersectionality of their gender, age, marital status and whether or not they have children, their role within the family, educational attainment, family economic status, and societal norms and values. These factors also influence the young women's ability to independently decide and to access the needed resources that facilitate the process.

I started the informal chatting with my mother and my aunt to know their perception about the recently expanding migration to the Middle East. Their response was interesting and motivated me to further talk with other parents. They started the conversation with me by regretting that they have no daughters to send to the Middle East like their other neighbours. My aunt, who has two young boys, also regretted that her elder daughter was married before migration to the Middle East was expanded in the area. Both mentioned the support migrants are extending to their parents and the fact that returnee migrants are running own businesses and are being chosen for marriage as the reason for their regret.

According to the interviews, there is a direct relationship between gender of the migrants and the type of the work the migrants do in the Middle East. As indicated above, the migrants do household activities which they grew up learning as daughters and put a heavy demand on their time hindering them to focus on their education. The broker I interviewed reiterated that the brokers spend much of their time inside the community in search of young women especially those who complete 10th grade but jobless and those who conflict with their family members. The brokers always prefer to contact their parents instead of meeting the young women themselves due to the assumption that the young women cannot reject their parent's order. Besides, contacting the young women directly does not help the brokers persuade them since the young women are dependent on their family members for the costs they need for different services including brokerage fee[10].

The traditional gender ideologies resulted in a clear division of duties/labour within the household or communities. Activities inside the family like cleaning, cooking, rearing children, washing clothes are assigned to women.

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[10] Interview with Belay, the broker.

28

These tasks are what the young women are supposed to do in the Middle East. Boyd and Grieco (2003:no page) explain that gender hierarchies and relations inside the family influence the migration of young women since female subordination to male authority develops within the family and the "family both defines and assigns the roles of women, which determine their relative motivation and incentive to migrate, and controls the distribution of resources and information that can support, discourage, or prevent migration."

Meaza migrated to UAE at 17 years old one year after she completed grade-10th and moved to Oman after working for eleven months. She had three elder brothers and other two sisters when migrating. She explained how her family singled out her in the following way:

> A broker came to my home and talked to my parents secretly. He suggested my parents send one of their daughters to Oman and after he persuaded them, they together preferred me since I am the youngest in my family among my sisters; both are already married. And my elder brothers are not supposed to migrate for domestic work. Everything was agreed without my knowledge and my parents told me a month later that they are planning to send me to Oman. It took me only a week to agree since I had no job and my parents cannot afford to send me to college. I knew my parents otherwise will force me to marry or doing daily labouring with a very low wage (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

During my fieldwork, I realized that many households have at least one migrant in the Middle East. The community's main economic base is smallholding agriculture characterized by recurrent drought. From the observation I made, I learnt that the majority of the parents especially mothers have no income-earning job or are involved in local off-farm activities while husbands are farmers, daily labourers, and civil servants. From the young women's words, many households are unable to send their children to colleges or give them money to establish their own business. Fernandez (2010:253) and Wasihun and Paul (2011:61) posited that informal economy serves as the source of livelihood for most of the people and there are limited employment opportunities in the formal economy especially for young women with secondary education. Additionally, four of the young women I interviewed were from a female-headed household. The parents I talked to informed me that women do not cultivate their land by themselves but they hire it to men farmers and divide the produce according to their agreement but usually it is on an equal basis. So, this coupled with the small size of

the farmland and sometimes drought leaves many households in poverty. Furthermore, all the migrants interviewed are below 30 years old who were born after the last land redistribution was done in Ethiopia in 1989/90. All the interviews showed that land is the most important productive asset on which the livelihood of the majority of the people is based. Traditionally, land alongside cattle is the main dowry their parents can pay when marrying their daughters.

During the interview with Roman who migrated to Oman in 2010, and her mother, deteriorated economic situation of their household is recapitulated as the reason for her migration. Roman's mother further disclosed that:

> Roman completed 10th-grade. She had no any income-earning job to help us. Though she, of course, we too wanted her to go to college, we could not able to. We wanted to marry her but since we did not have enough cattle and farmland, our plan failed. Hence, when a broker (female) came to our home and told us [mother and father] that she will give Roman a job in [Jeddah][11], we pressurized her to agree. We borrowed 7,000 ETB and paid it back after selling an ox to cover transport cost to Addis Ababa, broker fee, to buy her a telephone and related costs (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

In another interview with Hyab who used to work in Saudi Arabia, defeating the economic vulnerability of her family necessitates her migration in 2011. After completing 10th-grade in 2010, she met a returnee relative and motivated by the small boutique her relative opened and the house she constructed for her parents. She explained her plan and motivation to migrate as follows:

> My family is economically poor. While my mother has no job, my father works as a guard in a school. The farmland of my parents is too small to feed six members of the family throughout the year. To help my family, I started a daily labouring in a road construction with a monthly salary of 340 ETB[12] which is too small to feed the family (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

Other macro characteristics of Ethiopia and Maichew town especially also intersect with poverty and influence the decision who should migrate. Unemployment, lack of training and skill, gender discrimination and low pay in the labour market force the young women to migrate to the Middle East. The government of Ethiopia formulated Small and Micro enterprises as an employment creation and poverty reduction strategy especially for women since 2005. However, the participation of women in these enterprises is constrained by lack of

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[11] It is a common name given by the community to mean the Arab world and they spell it as Jidda

[12] 340 is equivalent to 13 USD according to August 2018 exchange rate (1 USD=27.50 ETB)

start-up capital, limited access to credit due to collateral, high-interest rate, low culture of borrowing and saving (Wasihun and Paul 2011:61).

When visiting the town and its outskirts, I observed that there are only two factories (brewery and chipboard) whose workers are predominantly men. The factories demand professionals but I observed fewer women professionals. There are also outdoor activities like loading and unloading but entirely taken by young men. Besides, from my observation in one of the housing construction sites in the outskirts of the town, I learnt that the daily payment for men and women labourers is different; while men receive between 80-100 ETB, women receive between 60-80 ETB. While chatting with one of the contractors in the site, I learnt that this practice is common throughout the country except in some government projects and he was unable to explain to me why this is the case.

Though poverty and migration are directly linked, it is not the poor who always migrates. Various studies indicate that people also migrate due to pressures from friends, false promises from brokers, forced and early marriage and conflict with family members. Selam's migration story is one instance that proves that poverty is not the only driver of migration. Selam returned in 2016 after working as a cleaner and caregiver to a sick elderly in Kuwait for three years. She is single and continues her college education after return to Ethiopia. When interviewing her, she narrates the reason of her migration in the following way:

> My father was economically better off. I was able to pass the grade-10th national examination with a GPA of 3.2/4.00. My father fulfils me whatever I want. However, the frequent quarrel with my stepmother was the main problem I had. She wanted to distance me from my father. As a solution, my father wanted to marry me against my will. Eventually, I approached a returnee migrant in our neighbourhood to introduce me to a broker. I convinced my father to give me 5,000 ETB to cover all travel related costs (field notes, July 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

Age is another determinant factor in the migration of the young women. All of the young women, except Sara and Sesen who were 20 and 23 respectively, I interviewed were below 20 years old by the time of their migration. The youngest age is 16 while the oldest one is 23. Belay, the broker I interviewed, revealed that:

> Brokers focus and favour those young women who are single and have no child(ren) since the employers and the agencies in the Middle East want us to recruit young women preferably those unmarried (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

Belay also explained to me that the employers and the agencies do not want the brokers to recruit young women who are married and those with children since the young women ask their employers to go back to their country for a family visit (mostly children and husband) and do not return. They usually ask for family visit when they want to exit the contract they signed to escape bad treatments and in search of better pay and working conditions. According to MoLSA as cited in Fernandez (2010:253), 91% of the young women domestic work migrants in 2008-09 were single. Belay further expressed that the young women are easier to persuade since they cannot reject their parents' order and due to their status i.e., their being unmarried and jobless. Intergenerational relations inside the household and the community is important in this regard. Children, in general, are raised being obedient and respectful to their parents, elder siblings and community members. The interviews with the parents revealed that failure to comply with parent's order and advice leads to ostracization and curse and is considered as bad luck. Vaughan and Tronvoll (2003:33) also revealed that one is sanctioned to follow the "orders from the above" including a fatherly order or from elder siblings and community members.

Those young women who are below the age of 18 but want to go to the Middle East by their own initiation, sometimes lie to the municipality that their age is 18 or above. Legal domestic work migration to the Middle East is not allowed for young women below 18 years old[13]. Since registration at birth was started recently in Ethiopia, the young women easily deceive the authorities when they want to have the local identity card important to have a passport. For instance, Selam, who migrated to Kuwait at the age of 16 uttered the following:

> While I was 16, my local identity card showed 23. When the idea of migrating to one of the Arab countries first come to my mind, I knew I am not eligible due to my age. I made it 23 after my father falsely told the authorities in the Kebele[14] that I am 23 (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

Besides, age and gender in combination have an influence on the migration of young women as domestic and care workers. Marriage has a special place in the community's life. While it is relatively less problematic for young men to stay unmarried, it results in stigma and other societal problems to remain unmarried

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[13] Interview with the broker and the migrants.

[14] Kebele is the lowest administrative unit.

for young women especially if they are above the age of twenty. Connotations like "rubbish" (*wudaq)* are assigned to them. These women are considered unwanted and not useful to the community. *Wudaq* is used by people especially during a quarrel to psychologically hurt the other. Notably, young women from a poor family who cannot afford the customary dowry are less preferred for marriage. Hence, migration to the Middle East is viewed as an opportunity to fulfil the dowry requirement from the young women. Solomon, Meaza's husband confirms that he married Meaza because he and his family assumed Meaza was collecting money while she was working in Oman. After becoming friends on Facebook, they wed five months after her return to Ethiopia in 2016 and Meaza's family paid a dowry of 90,00 ETB which they used to open a shop. Solomon expressed his doubt if he could have married Meaza if she did not have her own source of livelihood.

Therefore, various factors mainly age, gender, relative economic deprivation of the young women, and other gender norms come into play to weaken the agency and negotiation capacity of the young women and this situation forces the young women to accept imposed decisions against their will. These factors also coerce the young women to opt migration over whatever their parents may impose over them like arranged marriage.

5.2 Gendered power hierarchies and agency in migration decision-making

As a member of the community and my participant observation during the fieldwork, I had the chance to learn how the community functions and the way men and women interact within the family and the community. The interviews and observation show that there is valorisation of the oversimplified male qualities of having the ability to do things independently and short-changing of women and considering women as unequal to men in terms of their ability to lead the family and influence matters that affect families and their lives. The young women asserted that they lack the authority/power to prevent their parents from imposing decisions on issues like marriage, education, migration, even how to dress and behave.

The data also showed that intra-household distribution of power and re-sources and the value parents and community give to girls/daughters affect decision-making and bargaining capacity. Those parents I interviewed maintained that sometimes daughters are seen even as liabilities considering the dowry they are required to pay to wed them and underestimating the reproductive/unpaid works they do and hence favouring boys over girls though some families want to have at least one girl in the family to help her mother with the household activities. An important conclusion of the interview with the young women is that social norms determine the bargaining position and negotiation capacity of household members and affect their achievements in areas like education. For instance, the dowry system discourages parents to invest in girl's education. When interviewing Lemlem in her small shop, she explains the way her parents treat her and her elder brother in the following way:

> Immediately after completing his grade-10th, my parents enrolled him into a finance college. But the same did not happen to me when I completed grade-10th after two years. When asking my parents whether they can pay my tuition, they told me that they rather preferred to avoid selling cows and save them for the dowry they pay for my marriage (field notes, July 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

There are some studies that corroborate these findings. After explaining that "social interactions" among Ethiopian societies especially among the Tigray (where this study was conducted) and Amhara regions is hierarchically stratified, Biseswar discloses that women are "relegated to the bottom where they silently accept their fate, never daring to question male authority" (2008:140). Grabska et al. (2018:11) also found out that "girls are less valued than boys in the family as well as in the wider community" in Ethiopia. A group of women focus group discussants in Dito's study in Ethiopia indicated that they prefer "to have a blind son rather than a beautiful daughter" (2015:175).

The parents (mothers) were asked who in the household have the authority to decide on familial matters. Hence, family matters always wait for fathers to decide where mothers and daughters accept the decisions sometimes without objection. This has an implication on the young women's decision-making ability in affairs that affect their lives including migration. So, the young women lack what Kabeer (1999) said the ability to make choices or the resources (like asset and land), agency (the action to have control over decisions), and subsequent achievements in different aspects.

Based on an interview and informal chats with some community members, marriage, for example, is most of the time arranged which usually depends on the will of the parents and relatives. From the interviews I had with the young women, it was confirmed that the majority of the young women do not have the negotiation ability during the process of their migration. Some of them disclosed that they may initiate the need for migration as household survival means or for personal aspirations, they always depend on their household members for the finance that they need to pay to the brokers, transportation to Addis Ababa and other related costs and parental approval is a must while it is less problematic for young men to migrate even without informing family members.

Intra-household power relations result in an unequal enjoyment of agency during decision-making between men and women. The young women's gender identity influences their bargaining power when migrating to the Middle East. Marriageability and future maternal responsibility and the societal perception about marriage also undermine their agency in which they are forced to accept migration as a solution. The following statement from a group of fathers, in an informal chat during a "*debo*", confirms the above assertion.

> Young women should accept the order and advice of their parents. The marriage they may form should conform to the interest of their family and we [their parents] know what is good for them (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

Women in general and daughters, in particular, are quiescent in family and community affairs whereas fathers are the gatekeepers with the power to administer the family's resources and to impose decisions and rebuff decisions by wife and children particularly daughters. The participants similarly underlined that one can oppose whatever parents impose on him/her, but it is uncommon to reject since the community views their act as a deviation from the social norms governing the behavior of the community. So, the young women usually accept what their parents want them to do including migrating to the Middle East without their consent in the interest of the family. As Roman explains, parents sometimes agree with brokers without the knowledge of the young women and inform them to prepare for the journey regardless of their will especially if the parents are not in a position to wed their daughters due to the customary dowry.

Generally speaking, the unequal power relationship among the members of the household and the gender norms regulating these relationships downgrade

the young women where the family and community tend to view them as less important than men. This, in turn, impacts the assertiveness of the young women to oppose impositions and to view and evaluate decisions in their own interest. The way parents brought up the young women in a submissive way or telling them that they should accept whatever parents or elders said greatly undermines their capacity to bargain and exercise agency in the migration decision-making processes.

5.3 Agency, decision-making patterns and negotiation position

The degree of independence the young women exercise in relation to their migration decision-making varies. Interviews show that the idea to migrate may be initiated by household members or the young women themselves. However, family members especially parents are the final determinants of the young women's migration. This is due to the following reasons, based on the interviews with the migrants, brokers, parents and the informal chats. All of the young women interviewed except Sesen reported that they rely on their family members to pay all the needed costs. Sesen's travel cost was covered by the broker she met and paid her three months salary later. The young women accepted decisions since they consider migration important to help their family and pay back parents for raising them. Moreover, gender expectations force parents to prefer young women since they believe daughters are more likely to remit and help their siblings go to school.

Besides, as it has already been said in section 5.2 above, parent's preference of sons over daughters has a strong influence in the distribution of resources between men and women within the household and the community which in turn has an implication in the negotiation capacity of the young women. Naila Kabeer (1999) views resources, whose distribution is embedded in social norms which authorises certain actors over others in determining their distribution and access, as one of the dimensions of power important to make choices and enhance the negotiation capacity. According to Agarwal (1997:7) resources, though their access is also bargained, determine individuals' bargaining capacity within the household thereby enhancing their agency.

However, interviews indicate that the migrants play an active role especially in the final stages of their migration process. All participants confirmed that once the destination country is agreed and all the payments are done to the local brokers, the migrant themselves finish the remaining process meaning they usually go to Addis Ababa, the capital to meet the agencies and do medical examinations away from their family members.

Generally, different patterns of migration decision-making were identified. The patterns include, to borrow Hoang's naming, "consensual", "uncontested", "conflictual" and "negotiated". Hoang (2011:1446) defined the four decision-making experiences as follows. With "consensual" decision-making, an agreement is reached among household members before the migration. "Uncontested" one is when migrants decide in isolation or "without the involvement of household members" while "conflictual" decision-making implies unsettled decision-making within the household. In the "negotiated" case the disagreement concerning "preferences" are negotiated and resolved in the household.

The following testimony from Sesen who returned from UAE in 2015 partly explains the above assertion. Sesen's migration decision-making process represents the "uncontested" one in which she finally decides in her own to go to the Middle East. Sesen added that:

> After completing grade-10th in 2010, I was jobless for two years except the short time weighing job in my aunt's mill with a monthly pay of 300 ETB (11 USD). This money was too small to support a family of seven members. I heard that my parents are planning to marry me with a neighbouring farmer who is older than me. I decide to go to the UAE without the knowledge of my family members and the broker covered all the costs which amount to my three-month salary (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

In Sesen's case, a great deal of autonomy was displayed where she disregarded the familial and societal stereotypical remarks for ignoring her parent's plan of marrying her and choosing to migrate without informing her family. In other cases, young women prefer to inform their family members of their plan to migrate. Sara's decision-making process represents the "negotiated" one where her decision to migrate took place with the process of negotiation with her brother. Sara migrated to Saudi Arabia at the age of 20 and worked for only one year. She consulted her older brother that she is planning to go to the Middle East. She informed him because she relies on him to cover the overall cost. During the interview with her, she said the following:

> I told my older brother that I want to go to Saudi Arabia through the irregular route and told him that I need 20,000 ETB and wanted him not to tell other family members. He objected my plan, especially via the irregular route. He threatened me to drop my plan or will tell my father that I am planning to migrate. I begged him not to do so. We discussed the case and let me go but through the legal route and promised me not to tell the rest family members until I reached my destination (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

But Sara told me that she cheated her brother since she used the irregular route to reach Saudi Arabia. Sara told her brother that she dropped her plan of migrating by means of the irregular route since she knew that he will not give her the money she wanted.

From the interviews, it was also discovered that family members sit for discussion to decide on who should migrate in response to different family problems. Meseret who was 19 years old when departed to Kuwait and returned in 2017 after working cleaning and care work for three years disclosed that her family members including herself collectively agreed on her migration to Kuwait. While interviewing Meseret, she said the following.

> My parents borrowed 20,000 ETB each from REST, a microfinance institution, to build a house when I was a 9th-grade student in 2012. They were expected to pay the debt in three years time. However, they could not able to pay it within the stipulated time frame. Hence, after discussing the case with me, I accepted the decision and went to Kuwait in 2014 (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

Therefore, Meseret's words show that "consensual" decision-making process was made where all family members including Meseret agreed before the migration.

This shows that the decision-making process is complex as it involves the combination of agency, pressure and imposition from family members. Narratives of the young women show that family members especially parents are an important part of the decision-making process. However, the degree of the member's involvement varies. While some parents tend to impose, others support the young women find their way like acquainting them with a returnee or broker/agency and suggestion to migrate instead of imposing. Another interesting finding is that mothers and fathers within the household can have a different stand in which fathers most of the time impose, pressurize, and support their daughters to migrate mothers discourage the migration and oppose the decision. Therefore, mothers and fathers may be divided. When Tirhas's father presented the idea of sending her to the Middle East, her mother strongly opposed the

plan. Her mother even threatened her husband of possible divorce if anything bad happened to Tirhas after he told that he already agreed with a broker to send her. Grabska, et al. (2018:91) also discovered that the decision-making process of Ethiopian, Eritrean and Bangladeshi migrants is "complex and multifaceted" as it happens within limited options and is in response to various factors mainly the need to fulfil aspirations and support families.

5.4 The role of networks in decision-making process

The findings from the interviews disclose that social networks are important in migration decision-making. Siblings, relatives like nieces, nephews, neighbours, brokers and other community members are identified by the participants as the source of migration information. The participants gathered information from relatives, former schoolmates, and migrant friends in the Middle East or returnees before departing. Atanackovic and Bourgeault (no date) reveal that these group of people are important in sharing their experiences and provide information to prospective migrants. During the interviews with the parents and the young women, I discovered that parents especially mothers mostly collect information regarding migration. Studies show that brokers and recruitment agencies also provide information for prospective migrants irrespective of the dependability of the information. Word of mouth of the brokers is the main source of information about job opportunities to the prospective migrants. As Melat, a 22 years-old interviewee who runs a coffee-house and a mother of one baby-girl now said:

> When I heard about the successes of migrants inside the community, I contacted a returnee neighbour from Oman. I tried to learn about wage and the behaviour of the employers. But my mother, after met a broker, gathered information about the pre-departure costs and plights which were important inputs for my migration (field notes, August 2018, Maichew, Ethiopia).

Recollecting her experience in Saudi Arabia, Hyab, who worked for two years having legal status and for another two years as illegal, reported that to escape the abuse by her employer (she was working between 9 and 15 hours daily with only one day off weekly), exited her contract and lived in a house rented by her Ethiopian friend who put her into contact with an Ethiopian agency for another employment. Hyab was also thankful for the emotional support her friend provided. She also explained that some migrants with legal status

exit their contract and seek the support of their fellow Ethiopians for a better payment. Hence, the networks migrants establish are important for the migrants. Haug (2008:588) posited that networks aid migrants "finance their travel, to find a job or accommodation" and affect migration decision-making including plans and destinations.

However, Haug (2008:589) explained that networks can be both pull and preventive factors. She hypothesized that while social networks in the place of origin or residence can prevent or facilitate migration, social networks in the destination points increase the likelihood of migration since the prospective migrants are exposed to information channels. Blumenstock et al. (2018:2) revealed that though migration tends to be high in destinations with a vast array of networks, "larger networks" can also discourage migration. But interviews in Maichew town show that networks in the places of origin and destination increase the propensity of the young women to migrate. The participants revealed that they make use of networks from both their residence and destination areas. O'Neil et al. (2016:5) also reveal that "migrants often establish networks for social support; this enables other women and girls from their community to follow." Interviews with young women substantiate this assertion. Prospective migrants try to persuade other friends so that they travel together as this enables them to avoid risks of sexual harassment and exploitation by brokers and agencies, especially through the irregular route. Sara, who migrated irregularly indicated that going in groups is also important for the young women to share meals and other costs. Haug (2008:588) explains that networks may result in "migration chain."

The networks the migrants establish especially with migrants from the same town/village are also important to connect with families. Families of some migrants may not afford/have cellular phones or their employers may confiscate them in which regular contact with their families is difficult. So, the migrants rely on messengers to deliver letters about their wellbeing, remittances to their families at home. For instance, Sara illustrated that her employer seized her mobile phone suspecting her of communicating with other people to terminate her contract. Sara then had to depend on her friends whom she met when go out for shopping or during the absence of her employers to update her family about her wellbeing.

Therefore, networks influence migration decisions by exposing the prospective migrants to information access about job opportunities and working conditions in the destination points and on the other hand by providing protection for new arrivals including material and emotional support. Given the difficulty of the journey of both regular and irregular migration, networks are also important during the journey in providing migrants with collective protection and help them support one another.

5.5 Domestic work migration and women's empowerment

Migration is a multidimensional phenomenon which can benefit the migrants, the sending and hosting communities and individuals. Equally, migration can yield detrimental consequences for the migrants. Migrants usually exposed to abuses and the nature of the work and the working conditions may cause harm to the migrants. But in countries like Ethiopia where women have limited control over resources and less say/voice in decisions that affect their lives, international migration empowers women in their socio-economic, educational, and political lives and exposes them to new ideas and experiences though the respondents also explained that they face with similar or worse gender ideologies and stereotypes in the destination countries. Migrants enter into socialization and acquire what Peggy Levitt (2001) called "social remittances" which includes skills, knowledge, norms, values and forms of behaviour (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011:3) which are more important than the economic remittances since they remain "robust" even in times of economic and social crises (Akkoyunlu 2017:356).

All the respondents I interviewed emphasized that their migration to the Middle East benefited them in various aspects. During the interviews, all the participants told me that their migration benefited them in terms of boosting their confidence, starting their own business, the respect their families and community members showed them, change in their social status and promoting their saving habit. Most of them either opened small businesses like groceries, small boutiques, coffee-houses or own houses. Besides, majority of the participants mentioned the technological social media exposure they experienced after going to the Middle East. Six of the 13 respondents claimed that they able to have

Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp, YouTube and IMO accounts which they considered are vital to forming groups and networks to share information among themselves and used them to exchange information with Ethiopian community and embassy workers during an emergency. The basic Arabic language they learned is also an important input during their stay. It helped them avoid misunderstandings with their employers and subsequent avoidance of beatings and other mistreatments. From the interviews, it was noticed that quite a few of them gained inner-strength and self-esteem. The abuses, exploitation and hardships they endured made them stronger and expressed their readiness to face any hardship in their future endeavours. Hyab, who is 23 now, escaped her employer's exploitation and able to secure another job as a babysitter with a better salary. She said that the hardship made her stronger and in her second employment she even dared to express her grievances and ask for improvements of working conditions. She also added she is now courageous to go everywhere without fear.

The interviews also show the change in gender roles where the young women become breadwinners and shoulder the responsibility of educating siblings, which is usually the role of parents especially fathers, and a shift in power relationships inside the family. Besides, before their migration, they found themselves residing with and dependent on their households, carefully monitored by family members over their day-to-day activities including movements. But after return, the participants discussed that they freely decide where and with whom they can live and command of the money they accumulated and its expenditure though they seek family advice and support. Therefore, it brings them an increase in self-worth and an enhancement of their negotiation capacity/agency during decision-making process in issues like marriage. This implies Kabeer's (1999) understanding of empowerment as the process through which individuals acquire the power to determine their lives and pass own decisions. The migrants here acquired the capacity or power to make strategic choices with related impacts on their lives. However, their autonomy/agency is not fully assured as they are subjected to familial and societal controls. For instance, Melat who enrolled into an engineering course asserted that she was subjected to admonition by her relatives when she became pregnant before her marriage as her parents considered this as a disgrace to the family. She also received misogynist comments from neighbours.

Guzmán et al. (2008:126) maintain that since the remittance migrants send home to households increases their financial support/contribution, they tend to have a greater independence over the allocation and how family members should expend the money than if they had not migrated.

Akeza, who migrated to Qatar for the second time noted that her previous migration helped avoid all the confusions, deceptions and exploitations by the brokers. She characterized her first migration to Qatar as "maddening" since she was made to pay unreasonable brokerage fee, exposed to deceptions by the broker and the broker controlled her everything. But in her second migration, she directly flew to Addis Ababa from an airport in Mekelle, 120 kms north of her hometown, and met an agency by her own and arrange her employment with a considerable knowledge about her hosting country.

Contrary, domestic work migration sometimes disempowers women. Sesen, who regrettably described her migration to UAE as a waste of time despite the economic benefit it brought her, asserted that the frequent insults like "*shaghala*" (literary means worker), *"meskine"* (poor) and *"charmoota"* (prostitute) by madams and other family members condescend her dignity; diminish her value as a person and consider herself as unimportant.

Besides, all the participants mentioned the exploitations and harassment they experienced by the brokers, agencies and their employers. Beating, sexual assault, longer hours of working, salary denial, false accusations, threat of death are among the sufferings the young women faced. While emphasizing on the cruelty of the son her employers, Fiqr illustrated that she once even wished her death than the repeated beatings she endured. Demissie (2018:3) also noted that Ethiopians working as household workers experience confinement due to the *kafala* practice, sleep deprivation, sexual abuse, and found themselves as prostitutes as some of their employers operate secret brothels. He also indicated that racism and xenophobia are other problems that constrain the empowerment of the young women. Nijbroek (2016:16) maintains that domestic work is excluded from the labour rights in many of the receiving countries; unable to become members of workers' unions. Also, this prohibits domestic workers from getting legal protection and hence suffer violence, harassment and long working-hours but low salaries.

By and large, their migration brought them with a mixed impact. While it enhances their agency, freedom and it promotes their socio-economic status, it also exposes them to negative experiences especially those related with the nature of the work and working conditions though some of the respondents like Roman argue that the exploitation they endured during their stay in the Middle East is less detrimental compared to the exploitation they used to experience before their migration throughout their childhood.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This research paper explored the decision-making process and negotiations within the family and community including the factors that influence the young women's decision to migrate in Maichew town, Ethiopia. Studying migration decision-making and motives of returnee migrants is difficult since data is gathered after a certain amount of time and after the migration already took place which makes it challenging to capture the true picture of the process due to the distance between what actually happened and what the returnees can remember. Furthermore, data were collected at a single point of time using mainly semi-structure interview involving predominantly the returnee migrants where other actors with an actual influence on the decision-making process were participated to a limited extent. Nevertheless, the young women's decision to migrate is the reflection of their familial and personal concerns and the broader socio-economic situations. The study identifies that migration is viewed as a family strategy to minimize or avoid risks in which the individual migration is considered to be part of this strategy. What the migrants usually do is they deposit their monthly pay in one of their family member's bank accounts and what they usually take is what is left after the family invest for family demands. This finding strengthens the argument of the household strategy of migration which suggests that migration decision is made by families in which individual's decision to migrate is considered to be for the collective benefit of the family (Boyd 1989:645, Chant 1998:9, Massey 1990:9).

The study further found out that different intertwined factors influence the young women's decision-making ability and agency when migrating to the Middle East. Ethiopia comprises patriarchal societies and hierarchical families where unequal gender norms put women at a disadvantaged position with little or no power to influence matters and decisions that affect their lives. The traditional belief that daughters/women are good at certain activities and sons/men on other activities kept women to the private sphere and made them master in reproductive household activities which the community undervalues. This perception of the community results in the preference of sons over daughters or men over women and contributes to the weak bargaining position the young women

hold inside the household and the community. This speaks to Ann Whitehead's (1979) argument that gender relationships determine the position of women and the consequent ascription of roles within the household. These activities are what the young women are recruited and migrating for. The belief held by the community that children especially daughters should be obedient to parents and elders made the young women accept decisions without objection. Poor family economic conditions drive the young women to migrate. Poverty prevents parents to fulfil their children's aspirations like education and make parents look the remittances their migrant children can send. In this regard, the migrants' ability to independently choose and decide and evaluate things from their own prospects is restricted. Alternatively, their agency to resist or subvert the decision is compromised. Furthermore, their autonomy can be undermined since parental approval is vital to access finance and sometimes networks. Age also constrains the young women's agency. As it has already been said, young women are preferred by their families, brokers, and employers. However, given their age and the societal belief that parents should deal with familial matters, it is less likely for the young women to participate in the decisions though this is not the case among all migrants. Hence, the degree of agency the migrants exercise during the decision-making process varies. While some decisions are imposed other migrants decide unilaterally without interference from others. Migrants are also asked for their consent and become part of the decision-making. Still, other migrants negotiate and compromise some aspect of their agency. This finding builds Hoang's (2008) conclusion that migrants exert agency in migration decision-making to a varying degree in which other family members also involve and influence the decision-making process.

The study discloses that migration brought the young women independence with regard to decision-making, mobility, and a shift in gender roles within the household in addition to economic independence. However, they also suffered negative experiences like exploitation, harassment, confinement stigma and psychological damage. Their migration also promotes social empowerment to a certain extent. After return home too, the empowering effect of their migration sometimes is mixed. While it encourages their economic empowerment as it paves the way for them to have an autonomous source of income and inner-

strength, the socio-cultural norms of the community limit the emancipatory effects of their migration. They also gained agency and become assertive since it encouraged them to act by themselves and have control over some decisions and resources. So, their migration helped them gain the power or ability to make choices. Kabeer (1999) underlines that empowerment is a process through which individuals come to have the ability important to make choices which they have been denied before. According to Kabeer (1999:437), the process is a function of resources (human, material and social) which serve as a "pre-condition", agency which helps individuals define their own life chances and achievement. Besides, as Sen (2001) and Sinha et al. (2012) hold that improving the empowerment and agency of the young women also positively affects the lives of the people surrounding them. As the majority of the respondents confirmed, the remittances they used to send helped their family cover expenses for food, clothing and build homes besides to sending their siblings to school.

The review of academic literature on the decision-making processes among young Ethiopian women domestic work migrants indicates a dearth of studies. The existing literature heavily focuses on the exploitation, harassment, drivers, and reintegration processes. This, therefore, suggests for further study on the decision-making dynamics of the migration to the Middle East for domestic work among young women. Besides, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in the area of migration and decision-making dynamics in Ethiopia. Migration decision-making processes vary across societies owing to different socio-cultural values and norms that affect the process and in determining who should migrate. Being conducted in Maichew town where little or no research on decision-making has been done, this study provides a glimpse of the decision-making processes and the factors that affect it. Moreover, the study reinforces the theories that informed this study as it tests or confirms the theories by providing an empirical evidence.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Basic characteristics of the respondents (young women)

Name of the participant	Age when migrating	Highest education attained	Current marital status	Destination and duration	Current job
Meaza	17	10th-grade	Married	UAE-11months Oman-3years	Housemaid
Roman	18	10th-garde	Married	Oman-2years	Housemaid
Alem	18	9th-grade	Married	Saudi Arabia- 4 years and 6 months	Runs coffee house
Lemlem	17	10th-grade	Single	Saudi Arabia- 2 years	Small shop
Sara	20	10th-grade	single	Audi Arabi- 1 year	Small shop
Tirhas	18	10th-grade but didn't take the national exam	Single	Saudi Arabia- 1 year Oman- 2 years and 3 months	Mini-market
Hyab	18	10th-grade	Married	Saudi Arabai- 2 years and 5 months	Bakery
Melat	17	10th-grade	Married	Oman-1 year and 6 months	Coffee house and college student
Meseret	19	10th-grade	single	Kuwait-3 years	Coffee house
Akeza	18	10th-grade	married	UAE- 2 years Now- Qatar since 2017	Migrated back to Qatar
Selam	16	10th-grade	Single	Kuwait-3 years	Student
Fiqr	19	10th-grade	Single	Lebnon-2 years	Co-oowns a min-imarket
Sesen	23	10th-grade	Single	UAE- 3 years	Small boutique

Appendix 2: Characteristics of other respondents (parents, siblings, broker and hus-band)

Parents (Mothers)				
Respond-ent	Education level	Occupation	Marital status	Age
Akeza's mother	Illiterate	Housemaid	Divorced	54
Roman'a mother	Illiterate	Housemaid	Married	61
Selam's mother	Can read and write	Housemaid	Married	65
Melat's mother	Grade 5th	Housemaid	Married	50
Lemlem's mother	Illiterate	Farmer	Single	61
Broker				
Belay	Grade 12th	Brokerage	Married	35
Siblings				
Meaza's brother	Grade 12th	Trader	Single	28
Roman's brother	College di-ploma	Factory worker	Married	31
Alem's sis-ter	BA degree	Accountant	Married	27
Husband				
Meaza's husband	College di-ploma	Married	Tele Operator	32