

**International
Institute of
Social Studies**



Gig Economy in Ethiopia

**Exploring the Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities of Women
Drivers in ‘Sergela’ Ride-Sharing Service**

A Research Paper by:

Bimer Eyayu Enyew

(Ethiopia)

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

GDP

Members of the Examining Committee:

Supervisor: Dr. Roy Huijsmans

Reader: Dr. Farhad Mukhtarov

The Hague, The Netherlands

November 2023

Disclaimer:

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

Inquiries:

International Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460
e: info@iss.nl
w: www.iss.nl
fb: <http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl>
twitter: [@issnl](https://twitter.com/issnl)

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

Acknowledgement

First, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Roy Huijsmans (Associate Professor) for his valuable comments and consistent following throughout the research process.

Second, my appreciation and heartfelt thanks go to my second supervisor Farhad Mukhtarov, who gave constructive feedback to my research paper.

Third, my sincere appreciation goes to my discussant Alemeneh Getaneh who gave me important comments to enrich my research paper.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my Research Assistant Woinshet Leggesse who kindly collected, translated, and transcribed my research paper data.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	III
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	VI
Abstract	VII
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Justification of the Study	1
1.2 Research Questions	3
1.3 Significance of the Study	3
Chapter Two: Literature Review	4
2.1 An overview of Gig Economy.....	4
2.2 Women in the Gig Economy	5
2.3 Theoretical Framework	6
2.3.1 <i>Feminist Theory</i>	6
2.3.2 <i>Social exchange theory</i>	7
2.3.3 <i>Moral Foundations Theory (MFT)</i>	8
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	10
3.1 Description of the study area.....	10
3.2 Research Approach.....	11
3.5 Selection of study area, participants and Sampling Technique	11
3.6 Data Sources.....	12
3.7 Data Collection Instrument	12
<i>In-depth Interview</i>	12
3.8 Procedures of Data Collection.....	13
3.9 Data Collection Management.....	14
3.10 Data Analysis Techniques	14
3.11 Ethical Consideration	15
3.12 Trustworthiness of the Study.....	15
Chapter Four: Seregela Company’s Context	16
4.1 Why Seregela Company attract only women drivers?.....	16
4.2 Company Work Structure and related issues.....	16
Chapter Five: Results and Discussion	19
5.1 Participants Background Information	19
5.2 Work Conditions and Experiences of Women Drivers.....	21
5.3 Causes that motivated women drivers to join ‘Seregela’	22

5.4 Women Drivers Relationship with Others.....	23
5.5 Challenges of Women Drivers in Seregela.....	27
5.5.1 Social-Related Challenges.....	27
5.5.2 Economic-Related Challenges.....	32
5.5.3 Health-Related Challenges.....	33
5.5.4 Management problem.....	34
5.6 Opportunities for Women Drivers in Seregela.....	36
5.6.1 Meeting Diversified People.....	36
5.6.2 Financial Opportunity.....	36
5.6.3 Love the Job.....	37
5.6.4 Being able to work/ away from home/Job Opportunity.....	38
5.6.5 Skill Improvement.....	38
5.6.6 Create Good Opportunities for Other Women Drivers.....	39
5.7 Discussion.....	39
Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations.....	42
6.1 Conclusion.....	42
6.2 Recommendations.....	43
References.....	44
Appendix.....	47

List of Tables

Table 1: Research Participants Background Information	20
---	----

List of Maps

Map 1: Map of the study area (Addis Ababa). Source: Ethio GIS (2022) Socio-Ecological Practice Research	10
---	----

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions for Women drivers in Seregela ride-hailing service	47
Appendix 2: Interview Questions for former Women drivers in Seregela	48

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AA	Addis Ababa
AM	Ante meridiem: Before noon
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
Et al	“and others.”
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
GIS	Geographic Information System
Ibid	"in the same place"
ISS	International Institute of Social Studies
MFT	Moral Foundation Theory
PLC	Private Limited Company
PM	Post meridiem: After noon
SET	Social Exchange Theory

Abstract

Although ride-sharing services have been introduced in Ethiopia, especially in Addis Ababa, there is a dearth of research describing the experiences, challenges, and opportunities that come with them. This study aims to explore women drivers' experiences, challenges, and opportunities in the Seregela ride-sharing company. To conduct the study, a qualitative research approach with an interview method was used. An in-depth interview with eleven participants was conducted to collect data using snowball sampling. The main findings of this study suggested that women drivers were motivated to join Seregela because of their childhood dreams, economic challenges, and prior experiences. Women drivers in the company have encountered various challenges, such as social, economic, health, and management-related problems. Meeting diversified people, skill improvement, being a role model for other women, and creating job opportunities are some of the opportunities created by Seregela for women drivers. This study can be considered as a breakthrough to inspire other researchers to investigate the gig economy in Ethiopia. It would support women's engagement in economic roles and assist in challenging gender norms that can inform policy for more sustainable and equitable development. Therefore, by reducing the complexity of gender dynamics (gender-based relationships), it is recommended that the company, working with the city administration, give adequate attention to empowering and strengthening women drivers in ride-sharing services through promoting gender equality and tackling gender stereotypes.

Key Words: *Gig economy, Women drivers, Challenges, Opportunities, Seregela, Ethiopia*

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background and Justification of the Study

The gig economy is a new economic sector that has emerged over the past 10 years with the rise of smartphone technology (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2021, p.4). It has challenged the conventional labor market by creating new management systems, workers performance evaluation and supervision using disruptive technologies or smartphones (Ibid, 2021, p. 4).

Previous studies have shown that there are a variety of factors that encourage workers to join the gig economy. For instance, a study conducted by Pogorevici and Serobe in south Africa (2020, p. 15) found that income, flexible working hours, freedom, skill improvement, and less risk of job and income loss are the most important factors for gig workers to engage in the economy. Similarly, A survey from 3000 drivers by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa capital cities (2021, p. 8) found that about 47% of the gig workers were motivated to join Uber and other ride-sharing services was their freedom in choosing hours and places of work, around 33% of workers join the gig economy due to better payment compared to their previous job and 20% of them were motivated because of better working condition in the gig economy.

A gig economy is a “complicated network of socioeconomic and political entanglements” involving various parties (Wasilwa and Maangi, 2020, p.4). The gig economy in Ethiopia is new and mainly based in the capital city of Addis Ababa. The “riding share platforms” are among the key part of gig economy in Ethiopia. According to data from Ethiopia's Ministry of Transport, more than 10,000 drivers are currently providing “ride-hailing services” throughout Addis Abeba, the country's capital (Xinhua, 2022). Ride, ZayRide and Seregela are among the most well-known “ride-sharing services” in Ethiopia.

Compared to their male counterparts, women are underrepresented in ride-hailing as drivers around the world (Caribou Digital, 2022, p. 10). A gender-based study of ride-sharing platforms in Kathmandu, Nepal found that “the majority of drivers in ride-sharing platforms are men” (Hamal and Huijsmans, 2020, p.6). Women are disadvantaged by their gender, social norms, and fear of violence. For example, in Kenya, women have the triple burden of reproductive, productive, and community roles that limit them from participating in the gig economy (Qhala and Caribou Digital, 2022). Driving is not common among women and is a gendered profession given to men by society. In Ethiopia economy, most women are poorer

than men and have difficulty buying their own cars. With these challenges, there are few women who drive, but it is challenging to work in the platform economy. In the theoretical arguments of Hamal and Huijsmans study (2020, p.17) men and women have different responsibilities in maintaining “gender norms”. This is also true in Ethiopia where, because of the prevalent gender values and norms, men, and women as well as boys and girls have distinct roles, duties, and needs.

In Ethiopia, there are several companies who are involved in the gig economy. Ride-Sharing services are the prominent practices predominantly available in the capital of Addis Ababa. According to Addis Ababa City Administration Office (2021) data, there are various ride-sharing companies. While they make up less than 3% of the sector, women are hardly represented in “riding-share services” in Ethiopia (Xinhua, 2022). However, in a “male-dominated sector”, a remarkable initiative was launched by Seregela Taxi Ride, an all-women group of drivers (Ibid, 2022). The company was founded by Elias Negash in 2020 and currently employs 250 women drivers who have penetrated the “growing Ethiopian ride-hailing service” (Ibid, 2022).

‘*Seregela*’ ride-sharing service is among the gig economies practiced in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. The company employed only women drivers, and I am curious to explore the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of women drivers in this company. Ethiopia is a patriarchal society, and it is unusual for women to have such working conditions. Gender plays an important role in assigning tasks to women and men. In Ethiopia, there are jobs that are only for women or men, and there are jobs for both. Women are often employed in unskilled and low-level jobs, such as secretaries, cleaning jobs, etc. But Seregela, as a ride-sharing company, has broken traditional gender stereotypes and shown that women can do what men can do. Therefore, it is appropriate to conduct a study on this issue to understand the motivation to establish the organization with women drivers.

Moreover, examining issues such as the experiences of women drivers and the challenges and opportunities within the company would be of practical and theoretical importance. Because the practices and experiences of this gig economy have a recent history, there is very limited prior research. Therefore, it is important to explore this topic to find solutions to problems and show the benefits of the platform that can attract other interested or unemployed women.

1.2 Research Questions

Central Research Question

- How do women drivers' challenges and opportunities in the Seregela ride-sharing company influence the complex gender-based relationships and economic prospects in the Seregela ride-sharing company?

Sub-questions

- What challenges do women drivers at Seregela ride-sharing face in terms of socioeconomic status, cultural norms, health, and institutional support?
- What opportunities for advancement and empowerment exist for women drivers employed by the ride-sharing company Seregela?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The challenges faced by women drivers in Seregela ride-sharing company are highlighted in this study, along with opportunities for them to succeed in the gig economy, contributing to the corpus of research-based information. This study contributes to the discourse of gender and women's economic participation by identifying the challenges and opportunities faced by Seregela ridesharing women drivers and exploring their participation in the gig economy.

This study also sheds light on the characteristics of the labor market, the working environment, and the differences in wages that women drivers face from their male counterparts. By comprehending these dynamics, initiatives, and strategies aimed at enhancing justice and equity in the gig economy can be better informed.

Moreover, women may become more economically empowered because of their participation in ride-sharing companies. Therefore, by exploring the opportunities and challenges, this study can help shape initiatives and measures targeted at assisting women in achieving independent incomes and flexible work arrangements. In addition, by focusing on women's needs and advocating for their rights, this study can establish spaces and forums where women can share their experiences.

Finally, the results of this study can be used as a resource by various organizations that are interested in women's issues to gain knowledge about the experiences of women drivers in ride-sharing services. It also provides information for other researchers who would like to investigate this topic further.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 An overview of Gig Economy

Gig economy is a “labor market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs” (Kavese and Mbali, 2022, p. 3). Even though it is carried out through an online platform, a gig economy involves the relationship with clients based on temporary, flexible, or freelance jobs (Ibid, 2022, p.3). Pogorevici and Serobe (2020) in their study described the gig economy' also called the 'sharing' economy, 'open talent' economy, 'freelance' economy and the 'on demand' economy, involves a “temporary contractual job or short-term contract or freelance work that a person may take, on a project-to-project basis, for which the payment is made once the task is completed”.

In the article published by Josserand and Kaine (2019, p.559) ride- sharing service is a great occupation that allows workers to enjoy their freedom because of the nature of work. Participants of their study revealed that they like the job because they have no boss compared to the conventional jobs (Ibid, 559). Similarly, Anwar and Graham (2020, p. 1277) also pointed out the gig work shapes workers agency practices, such as having additional income for those who are employed regularly or self-employed.

Similarly, previous studies have shown that there are a variety of factors that encourage workers to join the gig economy. For instance, a study conducted by Pogorevici and Serobe (2020, p. 15) found that income, flexible working hours, freedom, skill improvement, and less risk of job and income loss are the most important factors for gig workers to engage in the economy. Similarly, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2021, p. 8) found that about 47% of the gig workers were motivated to join Uber and other ride-sharing services was their freedom in choosing hours and places of work, around 33% of workers join the gig economy due to better payment compared to their previous job and 20% of them were motivated because of better working condition in the gig economy.

Although the gig economy has advantages, it also has shortcomings to workers, especially to women. The Gender gap has a significant contribution in the gig economy (Dokuka, et al., 2022). There is a gender disparity in the gig economy due to men dominance in the public labour sphere (Ibid, 2022). In the article, “Gendered and Generational Inequalities in the Gig Economy Era”, Churchill et al., (2019, p. 634) highlighted that the absence of policies on work and care responsibilities have a significant impact on the future needs of women and

girls. Women working in the gig economy are also exposed to different gender based violences. “Women face sexual harassment and a very gendered division of labor whereupon they are marginalized and confined to typically feminized” (Churchill and Craig, 2019, p.757).

2.2 Women in the Gig Economy

Women are excluded from the digital labor due to their lower social status and household positions (Anwar and Graham, 2020, p. 1284). This idea is supported by Choudhary and Shireshi (2022, P. 1347) study that described “women from underprivileged backgrounds are generally not skilled in car-driving, ride-hailing and delivery services”. Moreover, women are challenged to be employed in jobs that require technology-related skills, which are predominantly male-dominated (Galperin, 2021, p. 1102). Traditional gender stereotypes promote women as weak, dependent, passive, and shy while promoting men as strong, independent, strong, active, etc. These attributes have their own contribution for the social, cultural, economic, and political status of women. Women’s role in the domestic sphere and men’s role in the public sphere in the long time creates the gender disparities in the gig economy.

Challenges for women drivers in ride-sharing services are not only before they join the gig job, but there are also many problems they face after they join. A study conducted by Kaine and Josserand (2019, p. 485) stated that women who are working in the ride-sharing are exposed to health, well-being and safety risks. Moreover, the working conditions are severe because they are deceived by their customers (Anwar and Graham, 2021, p.248). A study conducted in China showed that women in the platform driving are exposed to various types of gender-based discrimination (Kwan, 2022, p. 558) that include cancelation of rides and negative comments from the passengers. In addition, women drivers might be discriminated by their social media (TikTok) followers (Ibid, p. 558).

Women are predominantly engaged in domestic works, such as cleaning and caring due to the traditional gender role divisions (Churchill and Craig, 2019, p.756). In most parts of the world, gender divisions have left women in the domestic (private sphere) and men in the public sphere. As a result, due to safety concerns, women do not appeal who are working in the gig economy, especially in driving and delivery (Ibid, p.756).

The literatures that are from previous studies showed that women have faced different challenges in the platform economy although it is an opportunity in the other side. Ethiopia has a very recent experience in the gig economy. But, within a short time, there are several companies who are involved in the gig economy. Ride-Sharing services are the prominent practices predominantly available in the capital of Addis Ababa. While they make up less than 3% of the sector, women are hardly represented in “riding-share services” in Ethiopia (Xinhua, 2022). However, in a “male-dominated sector”, a remarkable initiative was launched by Seregela Taxi Ride, an all-women group of drivers (Ibid, 2022). The company was founded in 2020 and currently has 250 women drivers who have penetrated the “growing Ethiopian ride-hailing service” (Ibid, 2022).

‘*Seregela*’ ride-sharing service is among the gig economies practiced in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. In the beginning, *Seregela* ride-sharing company employed only women drivers. The company provides transportation services to passengers. Currently, the company is expanding its services like delivering food and drinks to the customers. As it expanded its career options, it included a few male drivers. The literature reviewed in this section will help me to explore the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of women drivers in this company which is the main objective of this study. Since this gig economy has a recent history, there is minimal research that has been conducted previously. Therefore, exploring this topic has a significance in finding solutions to the problems and finding out the advantages and drawbacks of the platform that could attract the other women who are interested or unemployed.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In this study, I have explored the experiences, challenges, and opportunities faced by women drivers in the gig economy's *Seregela* ride-sharing service using a variety of theories. Feminist theory, social exchange theory, and moral foundation theory are the most important and relevant theories selected as a roadmap for discussion in this study. Each theory relates to the experiences, challenges, or opportunities of women drivers in ‘*Seregela*’.

2.3.1 Feminist Theory

Recently, feminist theory is a concept that is playing an important role in academics and discourse. It focuses on the marginalization, subordination, and oppression of women in political, social, cultural, and economic issues that shape gender roles and inequalities

(Cocker and Hafford-Letchfield, 2022, p.40). As this study focuses primarily on women in the gig economy, a feminist lens is necessary to explore women's participation in the economy.

In this study, feminist theory is applied to investigate how gender norms, biases and characteristics affect women drivers' experiences and challenges in the 'Seregela' ride-sharing service company. It can be also used to find out how women drivers experience different forms of violence, such as sexual harassment, discrimination, etc. Because of their gender, women are vulnerable to exploitation, and feminist theory is deeply relevant to analyse the ways in which the Seregela ride-sharing gig economy exacerbates the vulnerability and exploitation of women drivers. This theory also helps to explore the power dynamics of gender in the ride-sharing gig economy platforms.

Moreover, issues of safety and harassment in the Seregela ride-sharing gig economy can be analyzed using the concept of feminist theory. Gender power dynamics contribute to these issues and feminist theory can help to develop strategies for addressing them. After identifying and analyzing safety and harassment issues in the company, policies and directions can be developed that prioritize the well-being of women drivers and passengers.

2.3.2 Social exchange theory

One of the most important theories in social sciences, social exchange theory (SET), has applications in many different domains (Rahan, 2023). This theory focuses on the interactions and social relations that people have with one another (Cook, 1987). From this study perspective, the social exchange theory can be applied to study how relationships among women drivers, clients, and the ride-sharing platform affect their experiences and outcomes. Alternative career opportunities' accessibility, social support systems, and personal values and beliefs are a few of the factors influencing women's decision-making in this circumstance.

The social exchange theory also highlights the value of reciprocity and trust in interpersonal relationships (Cook, 1987). This allows women working in rideshare services to build trust with customers and other drivers, fostering rewarding interactions and reducing the risk of harassment and discrimination. Social exchange theory is therefore used to study how loyalty and mutual benefit are established and maintained in this context, and how they differ for men and women.

In addition, there are “power relations” that can be studied using social exchange theory in Serlegera's ride-sharing business, which may unduly influence women. Women drivers, for example, may experience pressure to deliver a better quality of service to their clients to maintain a positive reputation and their employment, as well as a higher risk of sexual harassment and discrimination. Moreover, the role of social support in the Seregela ridesharing company, particularly for women, can be investigated using this theory.

2.3.3 Moral Foundations Theory (MFT)

Incorporating the Moral Foundation Theory into this research is essential as it provides a structural framework for investigating the challenges and opportunities encountered by female drivers in ride-sharing services. The moral foundation theory was developed by Jonathan Haidt and contends that making moral judgments and decisions requires “five basic moral foundations” (Graham et al., 2013, p.67). These are “*care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/oppression*” (Graham et al, 2013 p.68; Prince, 2010, p. 1296).

The “five moral principles and views” are relevant to this study because they help in investigating how they influence the decisions made by female drivers at Seregela Ride-sharing Company as well as how they interact with other drivers, management, and customers. For instance, related to fairness if women drivers do not use the Seregela app, they may “lie about the working hours” (Clifford, S. et al. 2015, p.1181). This illustration also has a strong connection to one of the core “moral foundations”, which is the “loyalty/betrayal” of female drivers as well as customers or passengers.

MFT can also help identify “moral conflicts” facing women drivers in workplaces. This study aims to shed light on women drivers' ethical challenges at work by investigating the “moral conflicts” (Musschenga (2013, p. 335) related to safety issues, customer reactions, and ethical treatments. In this context, moral disagreements may arise between customers and female drivers due to their perceptions of women's roles in the public domain, such as driving.

Moreover, this theory can be used to investigate the management systems of Seregela ride-sharing companies from the viewpoint of female drivers. As it is noted by Haidt and Graham (2007, p.105) people tend to respect, be in awe of, and admire good leadership because it is perceived as involving knowledge, kindness, and compassion, while poor leaders are tyrannical, abusive, or incompetent. More specifically, MFT can be used to discover how female drivers view Seregela's work practices and administrative frameworks, which include

equitable treatment and consideration for their safety, incentives, and customer behaviour. Furthermore, MFT can be used to comprehend the responsibilities of the company to provide care for female drivers against various threats.

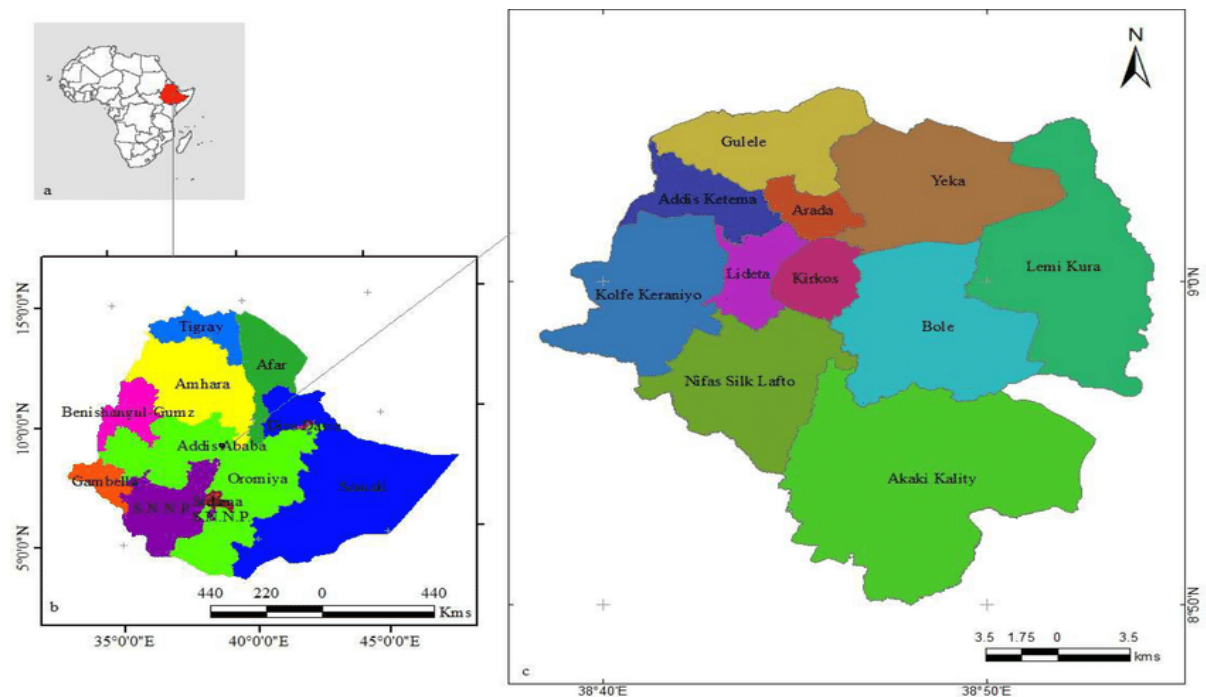
In general, the ethical and moral dimensions of the challenges and opportunities experienced by female drivers in the Seregela ride-sharing company can be better understood and comprehended through the lens of Haidt's theory of moral foundation. Thus, this theory can inform suggestions and actions to foster moral and ethical achievements in the ride-sharing service sector.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Description of the study area

Addis Ababa is the capital and largest city of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa, located at the center of the country, is the most important political, economic, and cultural city of Ethiopia (Erena et al, 2017, p.5). Due to its political, historical, and diplomatic importance to Africa, Addis Ababa is the capital of the African Union (New World Encyclopedia, 2021). The city is also the headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the United States and the European Union also have delegations in Addis Ababa (Ibid, 2021).

According to Ethiopia's official statistics, many people in the city are engaged in different economic activities, such as trade and commerce, manufacturing and industry, transportation and communication, education, various home manufacturers, etc. (Ibid, 2021). Addis Ababa city has many transportation systems which includes, buses, cars, and light rail. In the transport sector, there are economic activities operated through platforms as a gig economy. Ride-sharing services are among the gig economies that are practiced in the city. In the ride sharing services, 'Seregela' as a company has its own contribution for the gig economy of the city as well as the country by engaging women drivers.



Map 1: Map of the study area. Source: Ethio GIS (2022) Socio-Ecological Practice Research

3.2 Research Approach

The qualitative research method was the most appropriate research approach because the overall objective of this study was to explore the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of women drivers in ride-sharing services. Furthermore, the use of qualitative research is applicable if a researcher needs to study individuals in their natural setting. Myers (1997, p.7) said that “qualitative research is developed in the social sciences to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live”. Moreover, research based on a qualitative approach allows researchers to “view events, actions, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied” (Ibid, 1997, p.7).

For more than 50 years, qualitative research has been a prominent research methodology in numerous social science fields (Hammersley, 2013). It is important to study a specific group of people from their own perspectives, values, behaviours, and experiences. According to Sutton and Austin (2015, p. 226), “qualitative research can help researchers to access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, which can enable the development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences”. Therefore, I used this method to investigate the perspectives, experiences, and feelings of women drivers regarding the opportunities and challenges they face when they are working in the Seregela ride-sharing service company.

3.5 Selection of study area, participants and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Considering that the ride-sharing service in Ethiopia is widely available only in Addis Ababa due to the lack of development of the gig economy in the country, I selected Addis Ababa city as my study location using a purposive sampling method. In contrast to other ride-sharing services, Seregela employs a higher proportion of women drivers, which is why I selected Seregela company using purposive sampling.

The women drivers in Seregela served as the study's subjects. Initially, 3000 women were registered for the examination and 250 fulfilled the required criteria (Seregela Company, 2022). So, the company began its work with 250 women drivers. Accordingly, the research assistant selected study participants from these target groups. Both current and former women drivers in the company were participants. The selection of these participants was primarily based on experience. Except for one former driver, all drivers who had worked for the

company for two years or longer were selected. It was crucial to delve deeply into the opportunities and challenges faced by women drivers, which is why I concentrated on experience.

Non-probability sampling techniques are used to select the study participants in the qualitative research (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.78). According to Ritchie and Lewis, the reason behind this is that the qualitative research process focuses on discovery rather than hypothesis testing (Ibid, 2003, p.78). Therefore, a non-probability sampling technique was used that is consistent with the choice of study participants. More specifically, of the types of non-probability sampling techniques, the *snowball sampling* technique was employed. The snowball sampling technique helped the research assistant to select participants who had knowledge about the study and who had connections with their peers to collect relevant and rich data for this study.

3.6 Data Sources

Only primary data sources were used in this study. I used primary data sources because it gives firsthand information, and the nature of the topic required a primary source to explore the conditions in detail. Therefore, primary data sources were used to gather data on the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of women drivers. The sources of the data for this study were women drivers.

3.7 Data Collection Instrument

In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews are necessary to achieve the desired research goals because they are conducted face-to-face for a long time (Nayeem, 2017, p.4). It is a data collection tool that helps researchers gather more detailed information or gain a deeper understanding of the subject they are studying (Ibid, 2017, p.4). I used an in-depth interview as the source of data collection for this study because it allowed me to conduct a person-to-person discussion about the issue. The discussion provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the beliefs, emotions, and behavior of women drivers in their role in the gig economy. Moreover, this type of data collection instrument helped to explore the personal experiences of the study participants intensely. The tool did not restrict participants from expressing their feelings or thoughts but rather helped them to narrate their views in a flexible way.

As stated in the appendix, the interview was conducted using an open-ended format with a series of open-ended questions. To obtain general background information and to be clear about certain issues, only a few closed-ended questions were included. In the process of conducting the interview, first, the research assistant clearly defined the objectives of the research and the nature of the questions to each participant. After she defined the objectives and questions, she obtained informed consent from them and went through the interview. The main content included in the data collection was the experiences, challenges, and opportunities faced by women drivers while working at the 'Seregela' company.

The interview was conducted by a research assistant who is knowledgeable in qualitative research and data collection practices. The research assistant was a woman who is working at higher institutions in Ethiopia found in Addis Ababa. She has a master's degree in social Anthropology with over 10 years of teaching and research experience. Her academic qualifications and experience helped to build a strong rapport with the interviewers.

3.8 Procedures of Data Collection

The research assistant found the first interviewee through searching on Facebook pages. After she got the first women driver in Seregela, she decided the time and place of the interview together with the interviewee. It was conducted through booking rides. In the first phase of the interview, to create a relaxed atmosphere, the research assistant made introductions and introduced the objectives of the study. She started with an informal conversation to give the research participants a chance to relax and settle down by asking simple questions to put the interviewers in a good mood. She then monitored the interview progress by identifying the key issues that were raised by the participants, understanding what was said by the participants and the flow of ideas by the participants.

The research assistant asked the participant how to contact the next participant to set up the next interview after the first one was finished. This method of interviewing was used until all participants had been interviewed. Finally, *eleven* participants in total (eight current drivers and three former drivers) were interviewed up until the point at which the data became saturated. A tape recorder was used to record the interviews. Finally, the interviews were conducted in Amharic and later translated and transcribed into English.

3.9 Data Collection Management

Since I was here in the Netherlands at the time of the data collection, it was crucial to make clear how the data were managed and monitored during the collection phase. Before the submission of the final RP design paper, I had several contacts with her to facilitate the data collection. I made her clear on the objectives, research questions, and data collection process of this study. In addition, I gave her the final proposal that helped her to internalize and understand the research.

In the data collection time, we had contact to discuss on some confusions or issues via online platforms. I gave corrections or clarifications where she faced some misconceptions and unclarity in gathering relevant data. After the data was translated and transcribed by her, it was sent to me for the final data analysis.

3.10 Data Analysis Techniques

The qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews were analyzed using the thematic qualitative data analysis technique. Thematic categorization techniques were applied to organize, summarize, and classify the collected data into similar themes. The core themes of the analysis part were the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of women drivers in the ‘*Seregela*’ ride-sharing service company. I used the following six procedures to analyze the data that was collected.

1. I started by exploring the contents of each translated and transcribed data set and how they were arranged with respect to the pre-established open-ended questions.
2. I made notes regarding the main themes as well as recurrent concepts brought up by the participants.
3. I created a coding scheme that identifies participants, major themes, and sub-themes by deciding on a set of codes (labels and numbers) based on the study questions and the content of the data gathered.
4. To create a meaningful analysis, I reduced, synthesized, and summarized the ideas presented by participants in each coded theme.
5. Through the identified themes, I analyzed the opportunities, challenges, and experiences of women drivers for the ride-sharing company *Seregela*.
6. By highlighting the implications of each theme, I presented the findings and discussion section with each theme in a logical and well-organized manner.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

In this study, the research ethics were considered seriously. In the process of collecting data or conducting the interview, the following key ethical issues were deemed. First, I took a permission letter from the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) to be legal and introduce it to concerned bodies and all participants. Second, the research assistant explained the objectives of the study to the participants using the local language, which allowed them to understand that all information collected from the participants was used for research purposes only. Third, the participant's right to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw at any time was guaranteed. Fourth, the confidentiality of interviewees was kept. Finally, the consent form was given to each woman driver and put their signature to show the agreement.

3.12 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness is very important to maintain the strength of the quality of research. According to Pilot & Beck (2014, p. 490) trustworthiness is “the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study”. I did various tasks to ensure trustworthiness of the study. First, to convey the findings I used easy and simple language and description. Member checking was used to ensure trustworthiness by giving back the participant responses to the interviewees just to give them chances to say whether their responses were properly quoted or not. Finally, to enhance the transferability of the study the result of the study was inductively related to previous empirical studies and theories.

Chapter Four: Seregela Company's Context

4.1 Why Seregela Company attract only women drivers?

Seregela is a ride-sharing company founded in 2020 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It provides ride-hailing services through accessible devices and platforms to corporate and private customers by women drivers (“Seregela Ride PLC”, 2020). According to the company, they consider the task of finding employment opportunities for women as a responsibility so that women can be independent and contribute to the development of the country (Ibid). In addition, the company wants to use the qualities of women, such as honesty and safety, for the sustainability of the market for its business (Ibid). Participants of this study said that there is no private car driver in Seregela Ride Company. All cars belong to the company. Seregela cars have a partition to separate front and back seats for safety that was installed during the COVID-19 period. In addition to preventing COVID-19, the partition is also designed to prevent unwanted physical contact and theft (Participants).

More recently, a few male drivers have joined Seregela. Male drivers are not commissioned workers. There is a fixed amount of money deposited by male drivers per day, i.e., 1200 ETB. Once they meet that, the rest is used for fuel and themselves. This indicates that there is an income difference between male and female drivers. Therefore, the wage gap is the economic component of the gender difference that shapes and influences the roles and expectations of both genders.

4.2 Company Work Structure and related issues

According to the perspectives of participants, the organizational structure of Seregela ridesharing is not a well-organized structure like Uber or other ride-hailing services. Seregela is a private company owned by one person. The company has a manager, call center officers, and riders. Although it has these personnel, the organizational structure is not strong and has a poor relationship with the workers/riders. As the participants of this research shared their experiences and connections with the management, it is very poor. Based on the participants' experiences, it appears that there are organizational problems, such as unclear directions, inadequate communication, and lack of feedback.

According to participants, initially, the company had fixed working hours for women drivers in two shifts. As they explained the working time in their company, at the beginning, they were working two shifts: morning and afternoon shifts. The morning shift started at 6:00 AM

and ended at 2:00 PM. The afternoon shift started at 2:00 PM and ended around 10:00 PM. They worked for 8 hours per day and the company gave one car to two drivers who worked in different shifts.

The working time of women drivers in this company has changed now. They are working the whole day. They are working 6 days a week with one day off. For some Sunday is the day off while for others it varies. Participants' days off are not constant, rather it changes every week because it is the company that arranges the day off schedule. Some participants do not use their day off and work the whole day of the week. In between their working times, some drivers may take a break or nap. Totally, they may work 10 to 14 hours per day.

The company has a mobile app available on Google Play and APP store. They also have an alternative for customers to book online. Moreover, customers can call the company's call center at the short number 7878 to access the transport service ("Seregela Ride PLC", 2020).

As it is shown on their website page, there are steps to order a Seregela ride through the app, by a direct call, and online. For instance, to order a Seregela ride via the mobile app, customers should follow six steps. 1) download the app, 2) register using phone number and name, 3) verify phone number by entering a verification code that will be sent to the customer, 4) pick a destination, 5) know the estimated fair price, and 6) book the trip and the rider will come in few minutes. Similarly, the online order has six steps. But if customers want to order a Seregela ride by direct call, it has only three steps. 1) call their call center at 7878, 2) tell the operator the present location and the desired destination, and 3) the rider will come to the customer in minutes (Ibid). Yet, there are also cases where drivers use their mobile phones to do this job. Customers (regular) also have the option of calling the drivers directly to get the service. But the app's track will also work at this time, so drivers will be under the control of the company. On these occasions, drivers have the right to refuse individual calls if they are not in a good mood or have some quarrel with some customers.

However, online booking, the application, call center, and customer direct calls are only used for arranging trips and not for payment of service charges. The Seregela driver app helps both the company and drivers track where they go, how many kilometers they travel, and how much money they earn after the trip (Participants). No payment is made online, instead, customers give cash to drivers. Basically, there is no ride-sharing in the country that does the payment process online.

Another issue related to payment is the amount of income drivers earn per day or month. The payment process is a bit complicated. Even the participants in this study were not clear enough about how much they were being paid. The company pays them as commission workers every month and their payment is calculated based on the amount of money they make and the fuel they use in the month. Those drivers who deposit more money into the company earn more. Conversely, drivers who deposit less money into the company will earn less. They fill up fuel from the company. Therefore, the payment is based on the income they bring to the company, minus the fuel costs.

The company has corporate and individual clients. Corporates are those organizations that signed a contract agreement with the company to serve their employees. Insurance companies, banks, and embassies are corporate customers. Individual clients include people who are living in Addis Ababa city, countryside merchants, visitors, diasporas, and school children's parents.

Chapter Five: Results and Discussion

As mentioned so far, the main objective of the study was to explore the challenges and opportunities of women drivers in the Sergela ride-sharing company. This chapter attempts to focus on the results and discussion of the data obtained through in-depth- interviews. Findings from the in-depth interviews were presented and discussed in line with the research objectives of this study. The researcher disguised the names of the participants and coded them to keep the participants' privacy.

5.1 Participants Background Information

As it is stated in the table below, 11 participants were taken to collect the in-depth interview data. Of the total participants, eight of them were active women drivers, whereas three of them were former women drivers in the Seregela ride-sharing company. Except for three participants, the other interviewees were born and raised in Addis Ababa. Their age ranges from 28 to 39 and six of them are married. Among the participants, there are one divorced and four unmarried women drivers. Almost all participants have 2 or above years of work experience in the company. Except for one participant, the rest of the interviewees were engaged in various occupations before joining the Seregela ride-sharing company. All but three of the unmarried interviewees have children and the family size ranges from 1 to 5. All the participants are full-time employees.

Participants of this study found information regarding the Seregela ride-sharing company through multiple directions. Their family members, friends, drivers, and advertisements on radios and television played an important role for women Seregela drivers to get information. The table reveals that two Seregela women drivers have got the information through advertisement.

Table 1: Research Participants Background Information

No	Participants	Age	Birthplace	Marital Status	Family Size/Household size	How did you get information about Sergela	Work experience in Seregela/years	Job before joining Seregela
1	Participant 1	31	Adis Ababa	Married	4	Sister Friend	2	Business activities
2	Participant 2	31	Gondar	Unmarried	1	Sister Husband	3	Salesperson
3	Participant 3	35	AA	Married	3	Ride driver	1	Driver
4	Participant 4	29	AA	Unmarried	1	Ride driver	3	Student
5	Participant 5	36	AA	Unmarried	3	Neighbor	>3	Salesperson
6	Participant 6	34	AA	Divorced	2	Taxi driver	>3	Beauty Salon
7	Participant 7	38	AA	Married	5	Mother	2	Awash Insurance company
8	Participant 8	39	Dessie	Married	4	Advertisement	3	Own Business
9	Participant 9*	28	Kombolcha	Unmarried	1	Seregela riders	6 months	Merchant
10	Participant 10*	33	AA	Married	3	Brother	3	Delivery
11	Participant 11*	36	AA	Married	4	Advertisement	2	Shop work

*** Former drivers**

5.2 Work Conditions and Experiences of Women Drivers

The findings of this study indicate that women drivers have driving licenses before they join the Sergela ride-sharing company. Since the work takes much time and has no sufficient break time, the participants of this study have no side job. Women drivers in this company are commission workers. Their earnings are calculated by percentage and depend on the income they credited to the company as it is mentioned before. Their maximum and minimum daily income level fluctuates from day to day. When they do more rides, their commission also increases. So, their daily or monthly income level depends on the number of rides and the distance of rides, and they have no fixed amount of salary. For instance, one interviewee in this study elaborates her income level as follows.

*The highest amount of money that I deposited to the company was between 40,000 and 50,000 thousand ETB per month whereas the lowest was around 30,000 ETB. The commission fluctuates with the money that you deposit to the company. This job has times of either plenty of work or absence of work. For example, **during the fasting season**, there is not that much work; **when schools get closed like last summer**, we work less (Participant 8).*

As many people/students stay at home during these periods, it can be assumed that participants will not be able to do much work during the fasting period and when schools are closed. So, it is not because of the company or the drivers, but because of the lack of customers during these seasons, drivers do less.

The other important issue raised by participants is related to tips. Compared to the beginning of the work at this company, now the tips given by the customers have decreased. Participants of this study shared their experiences as follows.

The tip was very amazing, especially at the beginning. Customers gave us a good tip which was up to 1000 ETB to encourage us. For short-distance travel which costs around a 100-birr, one customer gave me 1000 ETB tip. Even these days, especially men customers don't take changes from women drivers. That is our advantage, nothing else (Participant 5).

This idea was also shared by another participant who explained her experience in the following way.

These days, due to the increment in living costs we are experiencing in our country, customers are not giving us that much tip. I could say it is almost none. I understand this is related to economic difficulties (Participant 7).

The economic condition of the country these days is challenging for Ethiopian people. The purchasing power of the Ethiopian Birr has decreased. There is a serious inflation and economic crisis in the country due to war, conflict, and other reasons. That might be why some people are not able to pay tips to the drivers.

In their first ride, participants of this study did not face a lot of problems because many of them had driving licenses and driving experience. The only challenge faced on the first ride by some participants was related to how to use the Seregela driver app and identify or get locations.

Women drivers in the Seregela ride-sharing company have different customers. For this study participants, most of their regular customers are students, diasporas, etc. According to participant 8, *'We don't get customers from a call center. The call center is very weak'*. This idea is also supported by participant 3, participant 4, and participant 7.

We rarely get customers from the call center, some other time we pick from the road or if they have our number, they will directly call us if they get our service good. The call center is not that active in reaching out to customers. It is from road pick that we get many customers. Because the car has the company's logo and it is known, customers may stop us and get our service. If they are happy with our service, they will have our number and give us a call whenever they need ride service (participants 3, 4 & 7).

Although these participants are providing services to their customers in a conventional taxi company way, Seregela has a mobile app to track the locations in the city and a call center to access rides for customers. Moreover, the money paid by customers can be checked by the company while drivers use the application.

5.3 Causes that motivated women drivers to join 'Seregela'

According to the in-depth interviews conducted in this study, women drivers have different reasons for joining the Seregela ride-sharing company. Among the causes that motivated women drivers to join Seregela include having a driver's license, a childhood dream of becoming a driver, COVID-19, earning their own income, covering family expenses, facing challenges, being unemployed, and doing what is traditionally called a man's job. For instance, participant 1 explained the causes that provoked her to join Seregela as follows.

Since I left my own business because of COVID-19, I have been idle. At the time, I had no employment. I have my license, which helped me secure the position. I also wanted to take advantage of the chance because the company gave me the job with the automobile. The license was the motivating factor behind my decision to work at Seregela. I have also liked driving since I was a young child. I didn't hesitate to join as soon as I passed the exam and had the opportunity to drive the company's car (Participant 1).

Participant 2, on the other hand, was motivated to join Seregela because of her strong desire since childhood. In the in-depth interview, she elaborated as follows.

Being a driver is my childhood dream. I always dreamed of being a driver and I became one. I love my job. Thanks to God, this opportunity is also a big deal. With zero work experience and without having a prior knowledge of the city because I came from the countryside, I am very grateful for the company for giving us this chance (participant 2).

Unlike other drivers, the divorcee driver was motivated to join Seregela to challenge the existing traditional perspectives and to show that she could do what others could do. She explained her motivation as follows.

First, I want to handle and manage challenges. I want to show people who think I can't do anything. In addition, I love the job. From my experience, I have never had friends close to me because my ex-husband has made me live in isolation. That made me to be afraid of everything. So, working in Seregela helped me get to know different individuals, make new friends, to be courageous to know things that I didn't know before. But previously, I always cried when someone said something that offended me. Even my bosses know that behavior of me. When I get tired, I cry. It is always crying that I always do when I face something. But now, working at Seregela makes me confident in my ability to do things (participant 6).

Like Participant 6, Participant 11, a former driver at Seregela Ridesharing, tried to show that gender differences cannot be a reason for individuals, especially women, not to do any kind of work. It is narrated as follows.

Driving is difficult for women when you think about it. It's good to be able to get that opportunity and be called to do the job. Being a man and a woman is not something that defines anyone's ability. The company has started its business with the thinking that women can do anything. Even after starting my job, it supported me with many aspects like giving training on customer management and so on. It helped me to realize that I can do more than being a taxi driver. This job is difficult not only for women but also for men. Women can do it even more than men. They do not like the comments given to them from outside. They are so strong. Seregela encouraged and helped us know places, develop our skills, know, and believe in our ability that we can do more than men. As the day goes by, you come to realize you can do it; not only that you are better than men.

5.4 Women Drivers Relationship with Others

Ride-sharing services are inherently a sector where employee-customer interactions occur on many occasions. It is also inevitable that women drivers of Seregela's ride-sharing service will interact with different people or customers. The findings of this study also explored the relationship of women drivers with various entities. Specifically, the study looked at relationships between women drivers with customers, other women drivers, and the management bodies.

Relationship with Customers

Customers are important persons for ride-sharing workers to generate more income. It is expected by drivers to handle their customers properly, safely, and peacefully. Participants of this study explained their relationships with customers in different ways. Almost all participants have a good relationship with their customers. For example, participant 1 revealed that she has regular and corporate customers within the country and from abroad as illustrated below.

*I have a good relationship with my customers. I have regular customers. If **corporate customers** are close to me, they would call me a regular customer. We drive them if they want to go to the airport, hotel and so on. If you are the one who repeatedly contacts them, we become close, and they will be our regular customers. Other than these, I have regular customers from **business areas and international agencies like the UN. Such customers choose Seregela for safety because we are women drivers.** They feel happy and free with our service.*

Similarly, participant 6 narrated her relationship with customers in the following way.

*I have a good relationship with most of my customers. But I serve different customers. Some may come with other intentions; some with bad behavior; **some customers want to negotiate with my femininity.** So, I try to give responses based on their behavior. If I find someone having repeated attempts to abuse my femininity, I will never meet him again and I block his number.*

Another participant also explained her relationship with customers as follows.

I have a good relationship with my customers. Most customers ask you about your life, marriage life, children, your general situation, and so on. If you tell them what you have, they will respect you. I try to handle my customers according to their behavior (participant 8).

Participant 10 who was a former Seregela ride-sharing company driver described her relationship as follows.

My relationship with customers was good. Most of my customers were children. Parents send their children with me. So, my relationship was with the kids. Many of them encourage us because many of us are working while being married and have kids. They give us tips as an appreciation and encouragement and help us create other customers.

Like participant 10, participant 11 who was a former driver in Seregela has a positive and intimate relationship with her customers as depicted below.

I had a good relationship with my customers like a family relationship. I don't have a problem handling customers due to my experience as well as the training that Seregela has given us. There was a customer who visited me when my family member died; I also visited one of my customers when his wife gave birth. Even after I left Seregela, some customers called me and ordered me to pick up some items from different places. Parents give us their children without any hesitation. Some customers still call me to pick up their children and elders. During this time, you feel proud and happy.

To sum up, women drivers in Seregela ride-sharing company mostly have a good relationship with their customers. Most of the participants have prior experience of how to handle customers in different job sectors. In addition, they have taken training by the company in how to handle and interact with customers. They also mentioned that there are different customers, especially in terms of their behaviors. Some customers appreciate and encourage women drivers, and some other customers try to ask inappropriate questions regarding personal issues.

Relationship with other Women drivers

This study raised questions about women driver participants' relationships with their colleagues or other women drivers in the same company. In this regard, both active and former women drivers explained their relationship with their colleagues. Most of them evaluated their relationship with their colleagues as a good relationship, and some of them considered the relationship to be weak. Participants 1 and 3 who are married and have children described this condition as follows.

This job doesn't give you time to meet and chat with friends. As a colleague when we meet on the roads, we greet each other. We don't have that much time. If I have time, I will go to my home (participant 1).

Similarly, participant 3 said that the working area of drivers is different, and she explained the relationship between the other drivers in the following way.

Even though we work in the same company, we may not meet each other unless we call each other to have lunch. I am from 'Gelan' and the other one may be from 'Piassa'. There is no way we can meet from 'Gelan' to 'Piassa' unless we call each other as I said. There are days that don't even come to the center if I get work around Gelan. But when we meet, we greet each other and have tea or coffee together. I don't have a bad relationship (participant 3).

On the other hand, many other participants in this study have described their relationship as a positive and good relationship. Most of the participants have good relationships with their colleagues. They spend time with each other having coffee or lunch. They also meet in the parking areas, when they give money to cashiers, when they give the car to the next driver (during shift work), and so on. Some of them also thought they were doing this job because they needed to have friends and build social relationships. Unique to other participants, participant 7 depicted her relationship with other women drivers in the following ways.

With women drivers, we meet at different social occasions. For instance, during funerals, when someone gives birth, or we visit when someone gets sick. We meet on such occasions. So, the relationship among women drivers is good.

Below, a former women driver also narrated the relationships among women drivers on many occasions.

In the beginning, we were working in shifts. So, when we are on the morning shift, we will wait to give the car to the next driver who works the next shift. At that time, we may have tea with others waiting for us. When we are working on the afternoon shift, we all go back home together by transport. So, there was also a chance to meet with other drivers when we gave money to cashiers. We call each other and have lunch together. So, we have a good relationship (participant 10).

Relationship with Management bodies

The findings of this study have explored the relationship between women drivers and Seregela company administration. Surprisingly, the findings indicated that women drivers have no strong relationship with the management of the company. Participants of this research shared their relationship with the company as follows.

We don't have regular face-to-face contact with management bodies because we don't have a fixed place of work. We communicate information through telegram. We don't personally know those who are working in different offices of the company. Let alone the administrative workers of the company, as a driver, we don't even know each other. Among the administrative offices, we have somehow frequent contact with the fleets. When we face technical difficulties and accidents, we contact them. But with the higher officials of the company, we don't have any relationship and we don't even know them personally (participant 1).

Participant 2 also described the interaction of women drivers with the management of the company in the following way.

To be honest, neither we know the owner nor does he. I saw the owner recently on Seifu on EBS TV show. Maybe he may have the information about us through our document at the office. But in person, we don't know each other. Regarding the relationship we have with the management, there is a limitation. If there is a chance of communicating with the management about our problems and things that should be improved as a company, we would be encouraged to work even more. The company is weak in this regard.

Similarly, participant 3 also explained the situation as follows.

It doesn't have any relationship at all. This means rather than giving orders, I have never seen the management do something different. From my experience, I see problems with the management body of Seregela Ride Company. They never have a dialogue with us to understand what has happened, our problems, our conditions, and what we expect and get from the company in general. I remember one time they called us into the compound to inform us that our income was getting less, and they warned us if we didn't incur a better income, they would take the car from us. It was not a meeting but rather like information exchange. They didn't ask us what our problems are; what we expect from the company, what are the things that should be improved in the company, and so on. So, I suppose there is a management problem in the company (participant 3).

Other participants of this study also reported that there is no frequent contact with the management bodies. Some of the participants stated that there were meetings and exchanges of ideas at the beginning but now there are almost none. They also reported that they have never met and discussed their problems and concerns on any occasion.

5.5 Challenges of Women Drivers in Seregela

There are multifarious challenges that affect women drivers while they are working in the Seregela ride-sharing company. The challenges that are found in this study are categorized into four themes. Social-related challenges, health-related challenges, economic-related challenges, and management-related challenges.

5.5.1 Social-Related Challenges

Driving in Ethiopia is mostly considered a male job and requires much time to achieve the desired goals. “Ethiopia is a patriarchal society” it is challenging for women to engage in such types of jobs. Traditionally, jobs are categorized based on gender and driving is already considered as a work done by males. Currently, women are drivers either to generate income or for personal interests. However, participants of this study mentioned that there are numerous social-related challenges that influence them in the company. These challenges include affecting family relationship, sexual abuse, affecting social life, working time, harassment, and being a woman.

Affects Family Relationship

Interviewees in this study delineated that being a worker or driver in a ride-sharing company affects family relationships and their social lives. As one of the research participants explained below, working in the Seregela company affects her relationship with her husband.

*Sometimes, if I have a busy schedule, I may spend the whole day in the car. **This affects the relationship I have with my husband.** He even asked me to get enough with the job or at least minimize the time that I spend outside. Mostly it is not me who takes care of my kids; it is my mom. I am lucky in that regard. But when I have some corporate tasks at night, I get home after everyone sleeps. Due to this, sometimes, he doesn't want to talk to me (participant 1).*

Another participant in this study stated that the job has challenges related to family issues, such as straining relationships with children. She described the challenge as follows.

Before I started this job, my children used to spend a lot of time with me. But now, I don't have much time to spend with them. I work longer hours because I think I must work harder because the company gave me the car. I don't have to sit. I significantly limit the time that I should

spend with my kids. It was me who cooked their food before, but I am not doing it now. This is how this job has affected my family life so far. So, I am dealing with these household issues by having a housemaid (participant 7).

Harassment

Harassment is another social-related challenge faced by women drivers at their workplaces. There are different forms of harassment that affect the participants in different conditions. Verbal, physical, psychological, and sexual harassment have been reported by the findings of this study. Insults like ‘*old lady*’, *assaults* and *unwanted touching*, etc. are some of them. In this regard, participants stated their experiences related to harassment as follows.

I have faced harassment while I was working this job. This incident was during the first few months of my job. I was new and I didn't know how to tolerate different behaviours. A man who sat near me tried to harass me verbally, sexually, and physically. He touched my thigh. By the way, I don't have an easy character that is convenient to that behaviour. Immediately, I gave my own response to him. I pulled over my car and opened the door at the man's side. I pulled him out of the car and slapped him so hard. There was a traffic police in the area that helped me at that time. He kept asking what is special about you; you are like other women and so on. I tried so hard to tolerate the man, but I couldn't. Then I took the man out of my car and went and did what I had to do (participant 7).

According to Participant 9, as she explains below, married men are also harassers.

*In relation to harassment, mostly it came from **married men**. They abuse you looking for you are your femininity.*

Regarding their femininity (womanness) as mentioned by Participant 9, women drivers are assaulted by their male counterparts. The deep-rooted existing patriarchal feelings and traditional beliefs exacerbated the hurts of women in the workplace. Participant 1 explained this issue well as follows.

*There are some customers who crossed their line and tried to ask for some personal information like marital status and so on. **Most customers asked me how my husband allowed me to have this job.** This is the most frequent question. Once they get the service, there are also other customers who keep calling me without having any place to go. They nag me to have coffee with them. There are also some customers who insult us if we make them wait for a while. Some customers lack understanding and respect towards us because we are women. I tolerate many behaviours and now I am accustomed to it. Some men customers call me as if they need a ride and when I go to where they are, they ask me to have lunch with them (participant 1).*

Moreover, women drivers are face verbal harassment at their workplace by their customers. As one of the research participants explained below, it's important to be patient when people try to verbally abuse you.

*Regarding harassment, thanks to the company, **installed a partition to separate the front and back seats for safety**. We don't allow customers to sit in the front passenger seat unless they are from corporate, individuals close to us, or customers whom we know their house. So, the issue of being vulnerable to harassment is not of a big concern to us. However, verbal abuse could happen. It is known that some customers might insult us or be mad at us. But we need to be patient. When they talk about things that make me uncomfortable, I politely tell them that I am married and have children. Some customers might ask what the problem is whether you are married (participant 2).*

Long Working time and night work

The time schedule is a cause for challenging the social lives of women drivers as it is portrayed by some participants. They are working throughout the day and sometimes they are also forced to work in the late evening. So, working time and working at night affect their lives. As it is narrated by Participant 2 of this study, the working time arranged by the company is not convenient for women drivers.

*It is not convenient to work on yourself to have a better job opportunity. If I don't have work during the daytime, I will try to work at night because I should meet that target. So, this takes much of my time which I should get rest on. I devote much of my time to this job rather than trying to find ways to update myself. In the beginning, we worked 8 hours a day with a shift. We have given one car for two drivers. It was very good. I think it was when we were told to work the whole day with the commission that many women drivers left the company. If they have something to do in the morning like getting ready their children for school, they will work in the afternoon. If they must bring their children from school in the afternoon, they will work in the morning. So, it was convenient. When we are informed that we should work the whole day, most of such parents leave the job. **It is very difficult to take care of children after spending the whole day in the car.***

Like this idea, participant 3 has stated how working in the nighttime is challenging for women drivers in Seregela.

Working late at night can be one of the challenges which I have done two or three times. There can be work at the airport, with corporates that have contract agreements with Seregela. Maybe their employees have flights, so I am expected to drive them to the airport at 3:00 or 4:00 AM. I consider waking up and working at such hours as a challenge.

Being a woman

Femininity is another challenge in this type of job for women drivers. The challenge is more severe for a country where traditional gender characteristics are firmly manifested and the existence of male domination in the domestic and public spheres. In Ethiopia, patriarchy is the most widely accepted and normal culture which is practiced across the country. Surprisingly, women themselves believed that masculinity is a standard for heroism, strength, chiefship, toughness, activeness, proficiency, etc. However, most of the participants of this

study do not give up because of patriarchy and traditional gender differences. Instead, they are doing what men can do, and fighting gender stereotypes and male dominance. In this regard, one of the participants of this study described this situation as follows.

I think because I have been in this job for long, I never consider being a woman as an obstacle. I believe that it all starts with us; we should say we can do anything. I believe I can do anything. Throughout my life, I have been engaged in different works that were more challenging than this one. So, for me, this job is the very easiest one so far (participant 3).

Similarly, another participant considers being a woman as an opportunity to challenge problems and misunderstandings. This is demonstrated by Participant 6 in the following way.

*The challenges make me strong and to be clever. For my experience, it makes me strong. So, **I consider being a woman as an opportunity because I have never thought of myself that I could have the strength to handle challenges.** But I did and I am happy about it. I enjoy doing my job. Whenever I need rest, I will go home and have a nap; I work when I need to work. I am happy with my job.*

Like Participant 6, Participant 7 also considers being a woman as an opportunity, especially to be chosen by customers although the job is not her preference.

*To be honest, the job is not the kind of job that I would prefer. But I am doing it because this is the only option I have. Driving is very tiresome since it requires every part of your body to be active; your brain, hands, legs, and everything. So, related to multiple factors, the job is very much tiresome. Other than this, I have never faced anything that makes me consider being a woman is also a challenge for this job. In fact, **being a woman gives me the chance to be chosen by customers.** For instance, if I stop my car in a place where there are other male ride drivers, customers will choose me. Because people assume that women are honest. It is known among most of our society, and we think we cannot conclude all women are honest. We are also cautious because we have natural fear within us. We drive very carefully. So, mostly, **parents and elders prefer women drivers for safety and honesty** as I have said.*

In the findings of this study, participant 8 also explained how being a woman is not a challenge that she can do what men can do.

*If she believes that she can do anything, **there is nothing that a woman can't do.** It is all about convincing yourself. If you have the thinking of having the ability to do anything, you will do it one day. On the reverse, if you have a mindset of inability, then you won't do anything because you have already blocked it. Even if the opportunity comes, you will not do it. So, it is all about thinking that I can do anything. Being a woman doesn't mean she can't do anything; it is all about her attitude and perception of her capacity (participant 8).*

A former woman driver in Seregela believed that women should work whatever it is if it generates income. Being a woman is not an issue for her and described it in detail as follows.

Being a woman is not a challenge for me to work in Seregela. For me, it is the money that is the decisive factor. If the money is good, I don't mind working as a shoe shiner. I don't deny that

*I've graduated for my family's pride which comes first. Second, human beings think according to their level of education. So, you have a good interpersonal relationship if you are an educated person. If I work as a shoe shiner because it is advantageous for me, my femininity doesn't get in the way to stop me from doing it. The main thing is you don't feel something bad or negative about the job. Otherwise, **my gender is nothing to do this job** (participant 10).*

However, there are some participants who are challenged by being a woman while they are working in Seregela.

*I only raise one thing for this question. There are some taxi or ride drivers who have bad attitudes towards women drivers. When you meet on the road where it is your turn to pass, those drivers try to pass you with negligence. Even, **they may insult you with bad words that they couldn't dare to say to men drivers**. And then it makes you angry and insults them back. This situation gets me angry and offended. So, I relate that kind of treatment to my femininity (participant 4).*

Household chores

In the case of women drivers in Seregela, the burden of household chores is determined by income level, marital status, and husband or man's role. Those women drivers who are married and have children are highly challenged by household activities. Women drivers who have more income can employ housemaids for domestic work. There are also men who help their wives with household chores. The findings of this study, however, showed that there are women drivers who are challenged by household chores. For instance, a single mother woman driver with two kids explained this challenge as follows.

It is very challenging to do household chores after getting back home. Basically, driving is also tiresome. It requires every part of your body. When you think about getting back home and doing those household chores, it makes you tired. But there is nothing I can do except do household chores for my kids like dinner. Sometimes, I may start working early in the morning and may not return home until the evening. So, when I get home after work, I must prepare what they need to eat for the next day (participant 5).

Similarly, a former women driver also stated the challenge related to carrying out household activities in line with driving work as follows.

It was difficult. Not only doing household activities, but I was also the one who bought groceries. My mother who is already aged is with me and I have two children. So, serving them in addition to this job was difficult. You may work until late at night or get out of home around 4:00 PM when there is work. So, on such days, I must cook breakfast and prepare lunch boxes for my kids. I must wake up before 4:00 AM to do all that. When you are given a car, you are warned not to decline corporate works if you are ordered at any time and any place. I didn't have someone who help me at home. Sometimes, as soon as I get home, I will try to arrange things for the next day. It was difficult and tiresome. After doing all these, in the middle of work on the next day, you feel sleepy. So, the only option you have is to pull over the car at the edge of the road and have a nap (participant 11).

To conclude, household chores are challenging for some women drivers because it is a must for them to feed and treat their family members. Some other women solve this challenge by employing a housemaid. It is generally challenging to those who are married and have children to work such type of work.

5.5.2 Economic-Related Challenges

This study also found economic-related challenges for women drivers in Seregela ride-sharing company. Among the economic-related challenges mentioned by the participants of this study include theft, work interruption, fuel cost, and financial constraints. Each economic-related challenge is mentioned below based on the opinions and statements of the participants.

Theft

There are thieves that challenge women drivers, particularly in the nighttime. According to Participant 1, there are even customers who are stealing mobile phones and bags from drivers. She explained her experience as follows.

*Thieves are among the challenges that we have. **Let alone working late at night, even during the daytime, they bothered us a lot.** Most of the drivers have lost their mobile phones and bags. I have also faced such incident of losing my phone. My phone was stolen by a regular customer. There was a customer who made me work around 2000 ETB on two different days each. Because he is a customer, I wouldn't say no even if he is at a distant place. The next day he called me, and I went to the place where he was eating his lunch. He came and invited me to have lunch with him. Then, I said OK and took my car key and phone and went into the restaurant with him. He ordered food and told me that he was going to take money from someone. Then he asked me to give him my phone so that he could call the person whom he received the money from as he said. Then I gave him my phone and he never returned to the hotel. My license and the money that I had made on that day were in my phone case and he took everything.*

Work interruption

Ride-sharing services are influenced by seasons, weather conditions, business activities, tourism activities, social and political stability, etc. If any of these factors affect the ride-sharing service, its performance may decline. Likewise, some participants of this study were challenged with the absence of work within a day or week. For instance, participants 2 and 7 described their problems related to work interruptions that influence their daily or weekly income. In addition, the car might be taken over by the company and given to the other drivers.

*It gets me so stressed when there is no work. **If I don't work for some consecutive days, the car will be taken away and given to another person who can work.** Since I live in a rental house and need to have my basic needs fulfilled, it worries me a lot (participant 2).*

Like Participant 2, participant 7 also demonstrated that the absence of work is a challenge to her and creates psychological problems.

*Certainly, work interruption or absence of work is a challenge. When there is no work, it worries me a lot. **Especially thinking of having the company's car and not getting a single customer is stressful.** Therefore, I moved around looking for customers and I could get one. By the way, the job is stressful.*

Financial constraints

Low daily income and fuel costs are the main financial constraints mentioned by Seregela women drivers. If they do not get the expected money per day, it is challenging for them to cover their costs and even to pay for the company. The working time and the work conditions determine the amount of money they collect during the day. Regarding this issue, some participants indicated as following.

The work needs time. Though I say I spend from morning to night in the car, it doesn't mean that I work that whole time. Even after you move around to look for customers and waste fuel, you may not be able to balance the money and the wasted fuel. This situation makes you hopeless sometimes (participant 4).

In addition to fuel costs, the other participant also mentioned that after she worked the whole day, she may not get a commission or pay to the company without any profit.

If there is no work, there will be no commission so you could take 1000 ETB which is considered as an initial salary. Because we know we are not accessible and don't get customers from the call center, it is with huge effort that we work. Many drivers get angry because the company doesn't understand our effort. We move around the whole city in search of work because we believe we need to work and get money. Without giving us customers from the call center, the company expected us to submit 1200 ETB per day. So, we strive to get that money for the company and for ourselves as well. If I work 500 ETB per day, my commission is 25 ETB. But you spend the whole day in the car and leave your children at home, so the money is not that much beneficial.

5.5.3 Health-Related Challenges

Working in Seregela company as a gig worker has many health-related challenges according to the participants of this study. Most of the participants connected this problem with a long stay or sitting in the car. Weight gain, Menstrual disorders, back pain, warts, gastritis, leg pain, Urinary tract infection, hormonal imbalance, and mood disorders are some of the health

challenges mentioned by the participants. Each challenge is described by interviewees as follows.

The job has many health challenges. I started this job when my second child was one year old. I have been diagnosed with hormonal imbalance which is the case for many women drivers in the company. Gaining body weight, irregularity in menstruation, different skin problems due to the radiation from the sun, and many other problems are related to the job (participant 1).

Participant 5 also described the health challenges of the gig work as follows.

Because I sit for long, I face different health issues like back pain, gaining body weight, and so on. After eating, I don't move around, rather I come and sit in my car. It is gastritis that disturbs me most of the time. In addition, one of my legs has a problem. When I sit for a long time, my leg hurts so much. These are the health challenges that bother me so far (participant 5).

Similarly, participant 6 also indicated the health challenges in the following way.

Related to health, the job makes you prone to different problems. For instance, I was sick due to warts 8 months ago. As a woman, I have health issues that result from this job like menstrual irregularity. I have gained weight because I spend all day in the car. I don't move that much. Because we hold urine for long, we are vulnerable to urinary tract infections. Many of us have similar health issues (participant 6).

Generally, the health-related challenges are the most serious challenges stated by the participants while they are working in Seregela company. It is mainly due to sitting for a long time in the car, and some of the participants are worried about how to give birth in the future time because of back pain. Specifically, when they have menstrual irregularity, it is challenging for them to work the job in those days. Sometimes, the company may not understand them when they work and make less money due to this health problem. Therefore, the most difficult challenge of this gig work is principally related to health issues.

5.5.4 Management problem

This study also identified the management problem as a serious challenge for women drivers in Seregela ride-sharing service. It is expected from one company to have a well-organized and structured administration system. However, the case in Seregela company is not good according to the opinions of the participants. As indicated by the participants, the management doesn't care about its workers in any circumstances. Almost all participants forwarded their views regarding the weaknesses of the management systems of Seregela. It is investigated in the following way.

The management has many problems, so it needs to be fixed. I have also tried to inform them about it. I believe that when employees do not work as expected, they should be asked about their problems and what has happened to them. The problem could be related to the health

issues of the person or some technical problems with the car. **The management doesn't care in what condition you are doing your job.** I have never seen them ask or discuss employees. If they get the money, they are not that much concerned about how you do your work. Let alone managers, even the owner should have a discussion with drivers on how to improve the company. Some individuals even assume as if the company is already closed. This much the company is losing its initial image in the minds of the society. So, if they allow us to discuss the idea of the society towards the company, we could say so many issues. But they don't discuss it with us, and I don't think the company is profitable these days (participant 3).

Similarly, another participant also described the problem of the company management as follows.

In the beginning, there were meetings at the end of each month in which those drivers who incurred more money were appreciated. Now, there is no meeting at all. In the first place, they don't even listen to us. It is always what they say that should be heard. We could also have problems. But when the frame rules, they don't consult us. Once approved, whether you like it or not, you will follow it. There is nothing the company does to encourage and appreciate its employees (participant 6).

Participant 8 also added on the challenges of the company related to management in the following way.

*Everything was great in the company at the beginning. However, after some time, it started losing it. I think the major reason for that is the weakness of the management. There is no one who manages the company properly. There is no meeting and discussion on what should be done. **The job doesn't have that much promotion.** It was just once they advertised the company nothing more. There are many things that make you angry and lose hope. You are treated as if you don't work well even if you do. There are many accusations against the drivers. But we are doing the job of tolerating different issues. When they order us to work at night, we do it without hesitation. We don't say we are not going to wake up and do it because we are women (participant 8).*

Like the active women drivers of Seregela, former women drivers also stated the management problems as follows.

The perception of the management towards women drivers is not good because they consider the drivers as they are giving them charity. The office is not like a place where you get in and out with confidence and respect. It makes you feel humiliated and stressed out thinking whether they will give you the care or not. It is not a company where you get your voice heard and respected (participant 9).

To sum up, both active and former women drivers of the company raised the issue of the management as a serious problem that affects their work. It shows that the management is not responsible for solving the problems of the workers. As can be taken from the views of the participants, the company has no mechanisms to appreciate and encourage women drivers rather it blames them and touches their morale. As it was stated before, the relationship

between the management bodies and women drivers is weak. Until these issues are resolved, it will be difficult to continue as a company, and many women drivers may leave their jobs and join other platforms or seek other opportunities.

5.6 Opportunities for Women Drivers in Seregela

Exploring the opportunities of women drivers in the Seregela ride-sharing company is one of the objectives of this study. Participants of this study have identified different opportunities while they are working in the company. These include, being employed, building a social life, skill improvement, meeting diversified people, financial opportunities, and so on.

5.6.1 Meeting Diversified People

Meeting different people at work is considered an opportunity by many participants of this study. Meeting different people helps them find customers and build social relationships, as well as learning from others throughout their lives. Participant 1 described this condition as follows.

I consider getting to know different people an opportunity. The job helps me to meet new people like celebs, artists, doctors, business individuals, and so on. There is no additional opportunity that I would say I get from the company.

Likewise, participant 4 also stated how opportunities are created at Seregela company in the following way.

I meet with different people so that I can make my social life strong. Because I don't stay in one place like office work, the job is not that difficult. I could say it is easy except for individuals' behavior.

Participant 5 also had a similar opinion regarding this opportunity.

Socially, the job gives me an opportunity to get to know more people and have friends. I get to know many people from different backgrounds through this job. There are also some individuals whom I relate with like family and friends. So, that is the social benefit of this job.

Almost all other participants also agreed on the opportunity of meeting diverse people as it is the result of being employed by Seregela company.

5.6.2 Financial Opportunity

Participants get a financial opportunity to cover their costs, like house rent, food costs and to raise their kids. Some participants explained this opportunity in the following statements.

Financially, being a gig worker in Seregela helps me to raise my kids. I don't think that much is big with this job. But I am working, and the company is paying me the salary that I deserve so that I can be able to feed my children (participant 5).

Similarly, participant 7, said that;

It helped me financially. I get paid at the end of the month respective to my performance. I was getting financial support from my husband before I started this job. So, it gives me additional income. This is one of the benefits.

A former women driver also stated that getting money was one opportunity when she worked at Seregela, as she explained below.

The financial benefit that I got from Seregela was the factor for me having a baby. But, to raise the kid, I had to look for a better income and I did that. So, financially it was good (participant 10).

5.6.3 Love the Job

Based on their interest and commitment to work this job, I consider being happy with their job/loving their job as an opportunity for women drivers. Many of the participants are happy with their jobs though there are many challenges. Participants of this study forwarded their opinions as follows.

***I love my job and have never considered being a woman as a problem with driving.** In fact, I am striving to find a similar job in which I can work with daily income rather than with commission, which would be better. I am trying to create networks with customers to let me know whenever they need information about driving job. Other than this, being a woman can never be a problem to any kind of job. I am happy with my job. I could say 90 percent of the time, I feel happy about it. The remaining 10 percent is given to the time when I feel discouraged or have my monthly menstrual cycle; I may not want to work at all. If not for these factors, I would say I am 100% happy about it (participant 2).*

Another participant also said that;

*I am very happy with it. Even when I have a day off, I miss my job. If it wasn't for me being tired so that I should take rest, I wouldn't use my day off. When I say this, it has nothing to do with money. I don't know why but I love Seregela. Although the management has problems and the money is not sufficient, **I love the job** (participant 4).*

Participant 5 explained her passion, commitment, and love for the job as follows.

I still have my own car which is rented out and I can do my own ride. But I love this job. I believe that what I get from this job and when I have my own is different. Because this job gave me experience in the area and helped me get different people, I don't want to start my own job.

Similarly, a divorced mom of one kid is very happy with her job at Seregela ride-sharing company, and said that;

I am 100 percent happy with my job. I am very happy. It is not because I love driving. Rather it is the social life I have with my friends. What I knew before was a man working and coming home at night. But now, I am doing it. I work till night. Due to that, my neighbors admire me a lot. They told me that I am a strong woman raising my child alone giving everything she needs (participant 6).

However, unlike the active drivers of Seregela, one of the former drivers of the company was not happy with the job she worked as indicated below.

I have never been happy with the job because the effort and time that I put into the job and what I get in return was not balanced. The commission was very low. I was a person who got paid 80,000 ETB per month when I was in Dubai although I don't compare the two. But the money doesn't cover house rent and transport. At least, it should cover those expenses. I was not happy with the payment when I was in Seregela although the job as well as meeting with friends makes me happy. I couldn't get the company as I expected (participant 9).

5.6.4 Being able to work/ away from home/Job Opportunity

In Ethiopia, there are many people who are unemployed. Women share the highest number of unemployed people in the country due to various reasons. Mostly, they are engaged in domestic activities as a housewife or housemaid. Therefore, Seregela company creates an opportunity for women to have this gig work. It can be seen from the words of the participants that this opportunity is important to them.

*I could say the benefit I get from Seregela is the opportunity that **I got to work and get out of home**. I was a stay-at-home mom for two years because the agency that hired me closed due to COVID-19. So, getting out of home, having a job, and creating relationships with different individuals are the benefits for me. I only consider being hired by the company and having the job as the only opportunity (participant 3).*

A former woman driver also stated how getting a job opportunity at Seregela helped her to find another better job in the following way.

Seregela helped me to have the experience of working this job. If it was not for Seregela, I wouldn't be working a ride. It is through Seregela that I found something better. Because I meet with many people in a day, it makes me sociable. It was also interesting to listen to the personal experience of each driver because every driver has his/her own story to tell. I really loved this experience from Seregela (participant 10).

5.6.5 Skill Improvement

Women drivers in Seregela have an opportunity to improve their driving and communication skills, as the finding shows.

I have got different skills. For example, I may have problems with the battery and the like, but I know what I must do when something happens with the car. When the battery is dead, I use a jumper. Since cars are new, they don't have that many problems. But if something happens to it, I have the capacity to fix it. I have also learned how to change tires (participant 6).

The other benefit I got from this job is that it helped me improve my communication skills and taught me how to interact with people. So, it helps me to make friends (Participant 7)

It helps me to know locations, improve my driving skills, and especially in handling different customer behaviors. It taught me how to treat customers respective of their behavior. Because I have been working in a boutique, I don't have a problem handling customers (participants 2 and 5).

As a result of their experience with Seregela, women drivers have developed new skills, including improved communication, the ability to locate locations quickly, and the ability to repair tires.

5.6.6 Create Good Opportunities for Other Women Drivers

According to participants, the Seregela ride-sharing company creates good opportunities for other women drivers. Participant 5 of this study explained this situation as follows.

*Associating women with household activities is becoming an old-fashioned thinking these days. Seregela is the company where we have witnessed women can do anything outside of the home. By the way, it was after Seregela that we started seeing women drivers in other taxi services like Ride. Those women, who already have a car put the ride logo on their car and start the job; those who don't have one, buy or rent a car and then start working. So, **it was Seregela who paved the way for women's engagement in ride services.** I would like to thank the company for showing us that women can do any type of job. It made me believe in myself that I can do anything; not see any type of job as a big deal.*

Participant 5, a former woman driver in Seregela indicated that her experiences in Seregela create a better opportunity in other ride-sharing services.

The benefit I got from the job was it helped me think that I can do the job. As I have told you, being a taxi driver is difficult, especially for women. So, it was Seregela who encouraged me to do that job from scratch. In addition, the customers I get from Seregela also benefit because they are good. Seregela also gave me good friends whom I consider sisters (participant 11).

In these cases, Seregela ride-sharing creates a job opportunity for women drivers and this in turn motivates other women to join this kind of job in many other ride-sharing services. The company also showed that women can do what men do because driving was conventionally considered as men's work.

5.7 Discussion

In this section, the main findings of this study are presented in relation to previous similar studies. It is organized in line with the major themes of the study in consecutive paragraphs.

Most participants of this study responded that they joined Seregela due to economic reasons, such as unemployment. This finding is supported by Valente et al. (2019, p.153), who

suggested that Uber drivers join the sharing economy due to economic reasons at the time of crisis and unemployment.

Compared to men, women are still caregivers and workers of household activities. It is not an easy task for women, especially for those who are married and have a child. Women are increasingly disconnected from the digital work system due to entrenched gender norms in patriarchal households (Qhala and Caribou Digital, 2022, p.15). Household chores are mostly done by women in Ethiopia. Women are caregivers, child rears, cooks, cleaners, etc. The country as a patriarchal society allocates tasks to women and men differently. Men are considered a breadwinner of the family, whereas women are homemakers. But Seregela ride-sharing company attracted and hired women-only drivers in its company to empower women and contribute to the development of its business. This initiative is necessary to challenge seemingly impossible tasks and traditional gender stereotypes. However, trying to enhance the business sector may have a negative connotation by considering the nature of women and their positive traits, especially regarding women drivers. Some of the participants mentioned that they might be more exposed to various forms of gender-based violence. Consequently, when companies such as Seregela prioritize women, they also need to consider the unintended negative effects on women in addition to their stated business goals.

In relation to the working hours, in the recent work situation, *Seregela* women drivers have their own schedules. This situation gives them freedom and they can work whenever they want, although the amount of money they earn depends on the time they spend in a day. Having flexible working times helps women drivers to manage their household chores because most of the participants have family members. A study by Qhala and Caribou Digital (2022, p.8) in Kenya on different shades of women in platform livelihoods, “digital platforms allow for flexible working times where women can plan their schedules to better juggle reproductive, community, and family responsibilities”.

In this study, participants have different clients including school children. Similarly, according to Mara (2020, p.125) study on the analysis of the opportunities and challenges of the sharing economy market in South Africa, parents choose ride-share to send their children to school because of its safety and suitability.

The participants of this study encountered various challenges while working in the Seregela ride-sharing company. Social, economic, health and leadership-related challenges are the most common problems faced by women drivers. As it has been shown in the data

presentation, women drivers in Seregela are assaulted by their customers because of their womanness. The study by Mara (2020, 127) also stated that customers have bad behaviors that challenge drivers, especially when they are drunk. In addition, as stated by the participants, there are individuals who assume driving is men's domain and women must do household activities. There are some men who say women drivers, '*go home and cook*'. When they first get into their car, some customers say to them '*Don't you have a husband? How would he allow you to do this job?*' This is negative gender stereotypes and male chauvinism that perpetuates patriarchy and sexism. This finding is aligned with Qhala and Caribou Digital (2022, p.9) study that found sexism as prevalent for women working in livelihoods that blend physical interaction and online work, such as ride-hailing.

As explained by the participants, the management of Seregela company does not have a mechanism to encourage and appreciate the employees, instead, it tries to control how much money the employees contribute to the company through the Seregela driver application. Likewise, Jeronimo and Guedes (2022) viewed the management challenges of the platform economy like ride sharing services in relation to 'power asymmetry' and 'labor insecurity'. Command and control in ride-sharing platforms using applications and tools may unknowingly create grievances among drivers and they may leave the company (Ibid, p. 534).

Due to Seregela Company, various opportunities were identified by the participants of this study, such as meeting diversified people, skill improvement, job opportunities, attracting other women to join this type of job, financial opportunities, and being happy with their work. Participants of this study have built social relationships with different people. The study conducted by Lai and Ho (2022) on the sharing economy is also aligned with this finding. It creates broader social networks and "builds social capital for collective actions" (p.112). Moreover, most participants are happy with their jobs though there are many challenges related to Seregela. The study, therefore, supports the findings of Valente et al. (2019, p.154) on Uber drivers when they are working as Uber drivers is enjoyable for those who have good interaction with customers and other drivers although they are unsatisfied with Uber.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to explore the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of women drivers in Seregla ride-sharing company in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In doing so, eleven participants were taken as a primary data source to explore the objectives of the study. The study addresses the experiences, and relationships of women drivers with others, and the opportunities gained by women drivers from Seregela.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the reason Seregela attracted and hired women drivers is to empower women and increase the company's income in a new way. Women drivers have also joined Seregela Company due to various reasons. Mainly, most of them were unemployed due to COVID-19 and the economic crisis and decided to join Seregela to earn money and cover their living expenses. The company started operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many people's businesses collapsed. At that time, women were also victims of the pandemic, so it was very important to find another working opportunity like joining Seregela.

The study explored different challenges that affect women drivers while they are working in Seregela. The nature of work affects the health and social relationships of women drivers. Due to poor communication with the management and its weak commitment to encourage women drivers, women are exposed to economic or financial challenges. Moreover, opportunities are also identified that make women drivers continue their work at the company. However, the study has limitations in incorporating the opinions of the administrative bodies due to their reluctant behaviours. Methodologically, the study findings cannot generalize the other women drivers who are working in other ride-sharing services. It can be generalized only for the participants of this study. Further studies must be conducted including the opinions of the management bodies of the company as well as the experiences of other ride services in the city with a mix of different data sources.

To summarise, this study has implications for increasing awareness of gender differences, encouraging women to work in the ride-sharing industry, improving safety measures, challenging gender stereotypes that affect women's careers in the public sector like driving, and utilizing study findings to inform company policies and strategies for equitable and sustainable development.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are forwarded based on the results of this study.

- Seregela is the only ride-sharing company in Ethiopia that started its business with women drivers. But I think it would be great if there were similar companies competing with Seregela. According to the participants, most of the time, customers accused the company because of its inaccessibility at different places in the city. Therefore, to create more job opportunities and satisfy customers, the company needs to strengthen its accessibility in collaboration with other ride-sharing companies and the city administration.
- All the participants in this study raised the difficult challenges of the management of Seregela. The employer-employee relationship is very weak. Drivers do not get promotions and appreciation compared to office workers. The commission given to the drivers is low compared to the amount of money they deposit to the company. Therefore, the organization should improve its work structure and direction to solve the problem of women drivers.
- Women should be empowered to get out of their homes and do this kind of job to contribute for their own livelihood and development of the country. Hence, awareness raising and massive education through media, online platforms, and training must be given to different sections of society to mitigate the negative gender stereotypes as well as gender-based violence.

References

- Addis Ababa City Administration Office (2021). Annual Report
- Anwar, M. A. (2022) "Platforms of Inequality: Gender Dynamics of Digital Labour in Africa," *Gender and Development*, 30(3), pp. 747–764. doi: 10.1080/13552074.2022.2121059.
- Anwar, M. A. and Graham, M. (2020) "Hidden Transcripts of the Gig Economy: Labour Agency and the New Art of Resistance among African Gig Workers," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 52(7), pp. 1269–1291. doi: 10.1177/0308518X19894584.
- Anwar, M. A. and Graham, M. (2021) "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Freedom, Flexibility, Precarity and Vulnerability in the Gig Economy in Africa," *Competition & Change*, 25(2), pp. 237–258. doi: 10.1177/1024529420914473.
- Atewologun, D. (2018). Intersectionality: Theory and Practice, *Organizational Behavior, Research Methods, Social Issues*, available at <https://oxfordre.com/abstract/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.001.0001/acrefore-9780190224851-e-48>
- Caribou Digital (2022) Women in the platform economy: Women's experiences of platform livelihoods in Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria, available at www.platformlivelihoods.com/gender.
- Choudhary, V. and Shireshi, S. S. (2022) "Analysing the Gig Economy in India and Exploring Various Effective Regulatory Methods to Improve the Plight of the Workers," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 57(7), pp. 1343–1356. doi: 10.1177/00219096221082581.
- Churchill, B. and Craig, L. (2019) "Gender in the Gig Economy: Men and Women Using Digital Platforms to Secure Work in Australia," *Journal of Sociology*, 55(4), pp. 741–761. doi: 10.1177/1440783319894060.
- Churchill, B., Ravn, S. and Craig, L. (2019) "Gendered and Generational Inequalities in the Gig Economy Era," *Journal of Sociology*, 55(4), pp. 627–636.
- Clifford, S. et al. (2015) "Moral Foundations Vignettes: A Standardized Stimulus Database of Scenarios Based on Moral Foundations Theory," *Behavior Research Methods*, 47(4), pp. 1178–1198. doi: 10.3758/s13428-014-0551-2.
- Cocker, C. and Hafford-Letchfield, T. (eds) (2022) *Rethinking feminist theories for social work practice*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, an imprint of Springer Nature. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-94241-0.
- Cook, K. S. (ed.) (1987) *Social exchange theory*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage.
- Cresswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Quantitative and mixed approach*.
- Dawson C. (2007) *A practical Guide to Research Methods: A user Friendly manual for mastering research and project techniques*, 3rd edition
- Dokuka, S. et al. (2022) "Women in Gig Economy Work Less in the Evenings," *Scientific Reports*, 12(1). doi: 10.1038/s41598-022-12558-x.
- Erena D. et al. (2017) *City profile: Addis Ababa*. Report prepared in the SES (Social Inclusion and Energy Management for Informal Urban Settlements) project, funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union. <http://moodle.donau-uni.ac.at/ses/>

- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2021) WORKERS OR PARTNERS? The political economy of UBER in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Johannesburg
- Galperin H (2019) “‘this Gig Is Not for Women’: Gender Stereotyping in Online Hiring,” *Social Science Computer Review*, (2019). doi: 10.1177/0894439319895757.
- Graham, J. et al. (2013) “Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism,” 47, pp. 55–130. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-407236-7.00002-4.
- Haidt, J. and Graham, J. (2007) “When Morality Opposes Justice: Conservatives Have Moral Intuitions That Liberals May Not Recognize,” *Social Justice Research*, 20(1), pp. 98–116. doi: 10.1007/s11211-007-0034-z.
- Hamal P. and Huijsmans R. (2021) „Making markets gendered: Kathmandu’s ridesharing platforms through a gender lens“, *Gender, Place & Culture*, 1-23,
- Hammersley M. (2013) What is qualitative research? *Research Methods Serious*, London
<http://english.news.cn/20220419/ff76fd377ae64d70b0284a852e3cf5a0/c.html> [accesse dnov2122](http://english.news.cn/20220419/ff76fd377ae64d70b0284a852e3cf5a0/c.html) <http://english.news.cn/20220419/ff76fd377ae64d70b0284a852e3cf5a0/c.html> [ml accessed nov21-22](http://english.news.cn/20220419/ff76fd377ae64d70b0284a852e3cf5a0/c.html)
- Jeronimo, R. C., Scorson, E. A. and Guedes, S. N. R. (2022) “From the Rule of Thumb to the Rule of the Algorithms: Command and Control in Ride-Hailing Platforms,” *Journal of Economic Issues*, 56(2), pp. 530–536. doi: 10.1080/00213624.2022.2063657.
- Josserand, E. and Kaine, S. (2019) “Different Directions or the Same Route? The Varied Identities of Ride-Share Drivers,” *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 61(4), pp. 549–573. doi: 10.1177/0022185619848461.
- Kaine, S. and Josserand, E. (2019) “The Organisation and Experience of Work in the Gig Economy,” *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 61(4), pp. 479–501. doi: 10.1177/0022185619865480.
- Kavese K. and Mbali A. (2022) The gig economy, digital labour platforms, and independent employment in the eastern cape, Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative council (ECSECC).
- Kwan, H. (2022) “Gendered Precarious Employment in China's Gig Economy: Exploring Women Gig Drivers' Intersectional Vulnerabilities and Resistances,” *Gender and development*, 30(3), pp. 551–573.
- Lai, M. K. W. and Ho, A. P. Y. (2022) “Sharing Towards Cohesive Community: The Role of Social Capital in Sharing Economy,” *Social Transformations in Chinese Societies*, 18(2), pp. 105–121. doi: 10.1108/STICS-05-2020-0015.
- Mara, C. (2020) “An Analysis of the Opportunities and Challenges of the Sharing Economy Market in South Africa,” *African Journal of Business and Economic Research*, 15(3), pp. 115–133. doi: 10.31920/1750-4562/2020/v15n3a5.
- Musschenga, B. (2013) “The Promises of Moral Foundations Theory,” *Journal of Moral Education*, 42(3), pp. 330–345. doi: 10.1080/03057240.2013.817326.
- Myers, M. D. (1997). *Qualitative Research in Information Systems*. *MIS Quarterly*, 21, 1-19.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220260372>

- New World Encyclopedia (2021) Addis Ababa. Available at https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Addis_Ababa
- Pogorevici C. and Serobe T. (2020) *Motivating Factors for Workers and Platforms in the South African Gig Economy*, University of Pennsylvania
- Polit, D.F., & Beck, C.T. (2014) *Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice* (8th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Pope C, Mays N. (2000). *Qualitative research method: A data collectors field guide* module. London.
- Prince, C. (2010) "Moral Foundation Theory and the Law," *Seattle University Law Review*, 33(4), pp. 1293–1317.
- Qhala and Caribou Digital (2022) *Different Shades of Women in Platform Livelihoods: Stories of Resilience and Empowerment from Kenya*. Farnham, Surrey, United Kingdom: Caribou Digital Publishing, www.platformlivelihoods.com/gender/kenya
- Rehan Ahmad et al. (2023) "Social Exchange Theory: Systematic Review and Future Directions," 13. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1015921.
- Ritchie J. and Lewis J. (2003) *QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, SAGE Publications London
- Seregela Ride PLC (2020) Seregela Ride Private Limited Company. Available at: <http://www.seregelagroup.com/> (Accessed 20 October 2023).
- Seregela Company (2022) Interview with the Manager of Seregela Ride-sharing Company. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzOxbYvfSxs&t=1650s>
- Srnicek, N. (2017) *Platform capitalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity (Theory redux).
- Valente, E., Patrus, R. and Córdova Guimarães, R. (2019) "Sharing Economy: Becoming an Uber Driver in a Developing Country," *Revista de Gestão*, 26(2), pp. 143–160. doi: 10.1108/REGE-08-2018-0088.
- Walby, S., Armstrong, J. and Strid, S. (2012) "Intersectionality: Multiple Inequalities in Social Theory," *Sociology*, 46(2), pp. 224–240. doi: 10.1177/0038038511416164.
- Wasilwa S. and Maangi G. (2020) *The State and Future Of The Gig Economy in Africa Inter Region Economic Network IREN Occasional Paper Series*
- Xinhua (2022) Feature: Ride-hailing service with women drivers only gains popularity in Ethiopia.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview questions for Women drivers in Seregela ride-hailing service

1.1 General Information

- a) Age
- b) Marital Status
- c) How many hours did you work with Serengela over the last week? Was this more/less than usual?
- d) What other paid work do you do?
- e) What kind of unpaid work/activities/chores are you doing, how many hours a day does this take?
- f) How tips are giving to you, in cash/using the app?
- g) Ownership of the driving car
- h) Family size
- i) Were you born and raised in Addis Ababa?
- j) How many years have you worked in Seregela?
- k) What was your job before joining Seregela? Their short career history to get the pathway into Seregela

1.2 Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities

- a) How did you learn about Seregela?
- b) What motivated you to join Seregela Company?
- c) How did you experience your first ride at Seregela ride-hailing company?
- d) What are the benefits of working at Seregela Ride-hailing Company? Financial, social, skill based, etc.
- e) What does Sergela management look like for its employees?
- f) What is your relationship with your customers like?
- g) Who are your regular customers? Do they use the app or simply call you?
- h) What is your relationship like with other women drivers?
- i) How is your relationship with other male drivers of other companies?
- j) What challenges or constraints do you face while working at Seregela?
 - ✓ Working time/hours
 - ✓ Family related issues
 - ✓ Sexual violence
 - ✓ Sexual harassment
 - ✓ Discrimination e.g., Ethnic based discrimination, etc.
 - ✓ Assault
 - ✓ Being a woman
 - ✓ Related to household activities.
 - ✓ Work condition, like absence
 - ✓ Traditional gender stereotypes
 - ✓ Health, well-being, and safety risks
 - ✓ Negative attitudes e.g., from their male counterparts

- k) What are the opportunities of being an employee of Seregela Company?
- l) Are you happy with your job?

Appendix 2: Interview Questions for former Women drivers in Seregela

2.1 General Information

- a) Age
- b) Marital Status
- c) Women drivers working time: Part time /full time
- d) How many hours and/or days per week did you work?
- e) What was your weekly or daily income?
- f) Ownership of the driving car
- g) Were you born and raised in Addis Ababa?
- h) What was your job before joining Seregela?
- i) How many years have you worked in Seregela?
- j) What is your job after leaving Serega?

2.2 Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities

- a) What motivated you to join Seregela Company?
- b) How did you see your experience at Seregela ride-hailing company?
- c) What were the benefits of working at Seregela Ride-hailing Company?
- d) Why do you think the Seregela company only hires women drivers?
- e) What did Seregela management look like for its employees?
- f) What was your relationship with your customers like?
- g) Who were your regular customers?
- h) What was your relationship like with other women drivers?
- i) How was your relationship with other male drivers of other companies?
- j) What challenges or constraints did you face while working at Seregela?
 - ✓ Working time/hours
 - ✓ Family related issues
 - ✓ Related to household activities.
 - ✓ Work condition, like absence
 - ✓ Sexual violence
 - ✓ Sexual harassment
 - ✓ Discrimination e.g., Ethnic based discrimination, etc.
 - ✓ Assault
 - ✓ Being a woman
 - ✓ Traditional gender stereotypes
 - ✓ Health, well-being, and safety risks
 - ✓ Negative attitudes e.g., from their male counterparts

- k) What were the opportunities of being an employee of Seregela Company?
- l) Were you happy with your job in Seregela?
- m) What is the difference between working at Seregela and your current job?
- n) Why did you leave Seregela?