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The Lived Experience of Waitresses in Hospitality Sector: A Phenomenological Study on Work Related Abuse and its Coping Mechanisms among Selected Waitresses in Hospitality Sector in Bahirdar City, Northwestern Ethiopia

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Abstract

A significantly high number of employed women work in vulnerable work environment. Waitresses' working in the hospitality sector experience different kind of work-related abuse. This study aims to explore waitresses work related abuse and its coping mechanisms in the hospitality sector in Bahirdar city, Ethiopia. A descriptive phenomenological study was conducted to describe the lived experience of waitresses in the work environment. Data were collected through an in-depth interview with waitresses. Participants of the study were selected by non-probability sampling. The collected data were inductively coded and developed into themes. Different kinds of data quality assurance mechanisms were employed to increase the trustworthiness of the study. The study finding shows that sexual, emotional, verbal, and physical abuse, physical health problems, work-family conflict, low wage are the major work-related challenges that waitresses experience related to their work environment. As coping mechanisms, waitresses reporting to their manager, getting help from co-workers and managers, tipping, and wearing fake rings are mentioned. Work related abuse in hospitality workplace is widely experienced by waitresses. A hospitality work environment policy to regulate waitresses' relation with customers, employers, managers, and co-workers should be developed. The existing national and international labor proclamations should be implemented on the ground. Moreover, pre-service, and in-service training about how they can deal with stressful situation are needed.

Keywords

descriptive phenomenology, coping mechanism, waitresses, work related abuse

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The Lived Experience of Waitresses in Hospitality Sector: A Phenomenological Study on Work Related Abuse and its Coping Mechanisms among Selected Waitresses in Hospitality Sector in Bahirdar City, Northwestern Ethiopia

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A significantly high number of employed women work in vulnerable work environment. Waitresses' working in the hospitality sector experience different kind of work-related abuse. This study aims to explore waitresses work related abuse and its coping mechanisms in the hospitality sector in Bahirdar city, Ethiopia. A descriptive phenomenological study was conducted to describe the lived experience of waitresses in the work environment. Data were collected through an in-depth interview with waitresses. Participants of the study were selected by non-probability sampling. The collected data were inductively coded and developed into themes. Different kinds of data quality assurance mechanisms were employed to increase the trustworthiness of the study. The study finding shows that sexual, emotional, verbal, and physical abuse, physical health problems, work-family conflict, low wage are the major work-related challenges that waitresses experience related to their work environment. As coping mechanisms, waitresses reporting to their manager, getting help from co-workers and managers, tipping, and wearing fake rings are mentioned. Work related abuse in hospitality workplace is widely experienced by waitresses. A hospitality work environment policy to regulate waitresses' relation with customers, employers, managers, and co-workers should be developed. The existing national and international labor proclamations should be implemented on the ground. Moreover, pre-service, and in-service training about how they can deal with stressful situation are needed.

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Introduction

The participation of women in the formal economic sector is minimal and they have traditionally been the most vulnerable groups in Africa (Efobi et al., 2018). A large majority of employed women works in vulnerable work environment. Hotel and tourism sector is an economic sector that is growing too fast covering large portion of the global economy. Socially constructed gender role divisions can be seen as a reason for women dominating in the sector (Baum, 2013) but men workers dominate in the high status and higher paying jobs of the sector (Masadeh, 2013). In many countries, including Austria 65 % and United Kingdom 60%, women dominate in this sector. According to ILOs report in sub-Saharan African countries, women workers in hotels and restaurants accounted for 65.5% whereas in Ethiopia women constituted 87.4 % in the same sector (Tijdens et al., 2013).

Hospitality industry refers to a sector in which hotels, restaurants, cafeterias and other food and beverage service providers largely operate. Working in hospitality sector can have negative impact on vulnerable workers like young, low skilled, part timers and women (Whiteford et al., 2014). The hospitality industry is recognized globally as an industry that has more workplace abuse than other industries (Jung & Yoon, 2018). Among these, sexual violence and sexual harassment in workplaces are serious public health problems (Eaton et al., 2004; WHO, 2018). The hotel and restaurant sectors are most frequently noted in EU countries as having a high degree of sexual harassment (Hoel & Einarsen, 2003). Waitresses had been subjected to persistent unwanted sexual conduct for many years in restaurants (Middlemiss, 2011). The concentration of vulnerable groups like, young people and women in the sector exacerbate their exploitation by different groups (Whiteford et al., 2014).

Workplace abuse against women can have overwhelming effect on women's safety, health, well-being and ultimately their work (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; WHO, 2018). Experience of sexual harassment in the workplace are associated with adverse physical and mental health outcome for instance distress, substance abuse and poorer overall health (Richman et al., 1999; Stenson & Heimer, 2008). Grossly, the consequence of workplace abuse can be emotional, psychological, professional and health related (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Shani & Pizam, 2009; Sojo & Wood, 2016).

Objectification theory described that woman are living in a culture that sexually objectify their physical attractiveness and separates the body from the individual as a person. It ranges from visual inspection of body and sexualized evaluation to sexual violence or harassment. The influence of sexual objectification includes self-objectification, shame, depression, eating disorder and sexual dysfunction (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The existence of sexual harassment in the study area, which is described by Szymanski and Feltman (2014) as the worst forms of sexual objectification, might be influenced by the existence of sexual objectification in the hospitality sector. Like that of Tavora's and Rubery's (2013) justification, absence of alternative jobs for waitresses and the existence of high rate of unemployment in the study area are taken as a reason for waitresses to work in sexually objectifying work environment.

Waitresses working in the hospitality industry have their own coping mechanisms. Coping mechanism refer to attempt to neutralize stress, or as any action that protect people from being psychologically or emotionally harmed (Scarduzio et al., 2018). While facing different challenges in the workplace, workers use different coping mechanisms that can be categorized as problem and emotion focused mechanisms (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017). In a study conducted by Igbojekwe (2017) on emotional labour coping strategies in some hotels in South East Nigeria, it's found that workers in hotels use surface acting and co-workers support helps them to reduce emotional dissonance. Frontline hotel workers also relied on substances like alcohol to cope with stress. These studies also showed that hotel workers felt powerless, having little control over big decisions related to their jobs (Belhassen & Shani, 2012; Wesolowski, 2016).

In Ethiopia, commercial hospitality areas are growing rapidly. However, work related abuse in the hospitality workplace still a hidden problem. Therefore, recognizing the experience and their coping mechanism are essential steps towards designing effective prevention program among women working in hospitality workplace. In addition, it creates a roadmap for future researchers on which issues of waitresses to stress. Thus, this study aimed to get a deeper understanding of the work-related abuse and its coping mechanisms in vulnerable working environment in Bahirdar city, Northwestern Ethiopia.

The researchers are male faculty members in a university with a master's degree. We all studied helping professions. One of the researchers had an experience of witnessing waitresses confronting the challenging working conditions in hotels, cafeterias, and restaurants.

They are dealing with demanding customers, managers and even the society have a negative attitude for waitresses considering them as a prostitute. We, the researchers shared our experience regarding the working condition of those vulnerable groups. We observed waitresses standing on a corner waiting for someone to call them. We asked ourselves why? Why don't they sit until they are needed? How long are they going to stand? Why are customers and managers so mean to them? What more problems do they face? This curiosity made us curious to know more about the abuses they faced. That initiated this research.

Methods

Setting

Bahirdar is the seat of the Amhara regional government and is near Lake Tana which makes it a destination place for tourists. The hospitality sector is expanding, accordingly. That creates a growing job market for waitresses. The rapid growth of Bahirdar city is followed by the rapid expansion of services including the hospitality industry, particularly that of hotels, cafeterias, and restaurants. CSA (2012) report also shows that there are about 9,983 workers in hotels and restaurants in Bahirdar out of which 8200 are women. Bahirdar used to have nine Sub-cities, according to the information from the newly established Fasilo sub-city employees. Since this newly established sub-city doesn't have comprehensive information about the hospitality sector, the researchers were forced to use one of the former sub-cities. So, this study specifically focused on Sefene-Selam sub city. The sub-city, according to the information from the public and employees in the sub-city, is a hub of Bahirdar city hospitality sector.

Study Design

As phenomenology states, rather than theorizing or prior interpretation, the researchers believe that human experience makes more sense to those who live it and, other than anything else, it's this lived experience that owns the inherent structural experience of waitresses in the study (Husserl, n.d. as cited in Dukes, 1984). A qualitative descriptive phenomenological design was employed to explore and have detailed understanding of abusive experiences of waitresses working in hospitality sector specifically in hotels, cafeterias, and restaurants. We used descriptive phenomenology because we wanted to describe the situation as it was. Sloan and Bowe (2014) stated that descriptive phenomenology is focused on identifying the things themselves. This made it best to achieve our aim. Descriptive phenomenology is based on bracketing which means separating the researchers' values, concepts and understanding about the phenomena (Nawaz et al., 2017). We intend to describe the structure of phenomenon, in our case waitresses abuse, as it is reflected on their lived experience using language that reflects the transformation of participants' expression into psychological expressions (Giorgi, 2009). Given that, we reflected on our views and knowledge of abuse to minimize the influence of preconceived notions or assumptions. Bracketing was used on the interview and analysis process. Hence, in-depth interview was used to collect data. The interview used semi structured questions which were open ended and most of the data was gathered using probing. Waitresses who work in hotels, cafeteria and restaurants participated in the research.

Sampling Size

In phenomenology, sampling selection is done by considerations. In these kinds of studies there is always a danger of either seeing what we want to see rather than what is there to be seen (Dukes, 1984). Sample size can be determined, as descriptive phenomenology

scholars suggest based on the research questions of the study (Bartholomew et al., 2021). By keeping in mind all the above considerations 12 willingly consented waitresses in hotels, cafeterias and restaurants participated in the in-depth interview.

Inclusion Criteria

Waitresses who were participant of this study have stayed six months and above in the work settings. Regarding the research setting, only those waitresses who were working in hotel, cafeterias or restaurant services are included. For exploring and understanding the experiences of waitresses, the above three settings were chosen. Since most of the waitresses are migrants who come from different rural areas, it was not possible to get consent from parents or legal guardians. So, those waitresses under the age of 18 were not included in this study.

Data Collection Procedure

This study used in-depth interview. Interview guide was used for the in-depth interview. In the phenomenological investigation is characterized as long interview in which data is collected through open ended question after the interviewer develops informal interactive relationship with participant waitresses (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher has scheduled appointment with waitresses by going to their workplaces. Ethical approval was obtained from Mizan-Tepi University Institutional Review Board (IRB). We also follow the WHO (2007) ethical and Safety recommendation for exploring sensitive topics. Moreover, this study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Participant waitresses were informed that they have the right to refuse participation at any time or to not respond to certain questions. Participant waitresses were also assured privacy and confidentiality that their name will not be mentioned and the data they provided will not be used for purposes other than the study. The interviews lasted from 40 to 70 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in Amharic which was a mother tongue for the participants. The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants.

Data Analysis

The data collected through in-depth interview was transcribed and translated to English. We used thematic analysis. Van Manen (1990) as mentioned in Gill (2020) states “researcher conducts thematic analyses to determine the themes or experiential structures that make up an experience” (p. 11). We organized and prepared the data for analysis (transcribed and translated).

Organizing data collected from waitresses begins when we transcribed interviews before him or her and started to study the transcribed interviews through the process of phenomenal analysis. These processes include horizontalizing the interview data by regarding every statement in the horizon as relevant for the study. Then, from the horizontalized statements, we have listed the meaning or meaning units. Then, we have clustered these meanings into common categories or themes by removing overlapping and repetitive statements. Afterwards, we have used these clustered themes or categories to develop the textural descriptions of waitresses in the work environment. From the textural descriptions, structural descriptions and an integration of textures and structures into the meanings and essences of waitresses work related abuse and their coping mechanisms are constructed (Moustakas, 1994).

To increase the quality of our data we have used tips suggested by Rodham, Fox, and Duran (2015) for phenomenological research. First, since all the three researchers were

involved in the analysis, to avoid the biased interpretation of the data, we listened to audio recordings of all participant waitresses. Secondly, one of the researchers who conducted the interview has shared the contexts on which the interviews were conducted. Finally, we created a collaborative environment in which we have critically engaged in one another's interpretations.

Findings

Our findings from the interview showed that sexual abuse, physical and emotional abuse, and verbal, physical abuse, work-family conflict, and low wage are the major work-related challenges that waitresses experience. Their coping mechanisms were also discussed in this section. For a clear understanding of participant waitresses' condition, their background characteristics are attached as supplementary file.

Abuse Related Challenges

We found that sexual abuse of waitresses is a common practice in the work environment. The perpetrators of the abuse are customers, managers, and coworkers. Commenting on waitress's feminine body, insulting based on her sex, making sexual advances and comments. Tiringo, a waitress in a restaurant describes her one experience in relation to this as:

I was in the evening shift and when I went to my home around 4 o'clock I met with a guy that I know in the restaurant. He used to ask me my phone number, but I refuse. It was raining and he had an umbrella in his hand. He asked to walk with me, and I said OK. We start to walk together under his umbrella. After some walks we reached to a dark place, and he took my hand and pushes me to the ground I shout too loud, and people come to near me, and he run away and leaves the area.

Stories from participants of the study also show that sexual harassment is also committed by managers. A story from Banchi, a hotel waitress, shows abusive experience from her manager as:

I was in the morning shift, and I was home preparing the house around 12 o'clock local time in the evening. My manager called me and said that he wanted me immediately to discuss about the job. But he told me to meet him in a hotel which is far from the workplace. I was suspicious and I went to the place he waited, he asked me to sleep with him after I refuse to stay in the hotel, then he started to use his power that he will fire me if I refuse to sleep with him, but I was angry and I just leave the hotel. After that day he always spread bad rumors about me to employers and co-workers.

Some managers also play their own role by facilitating sexual abuses in the workplace to secure their business and not to lose customers. Banchi, hotel waitress, added:

Four male customers, after using service, one of their friends asked me to be with him when I finish my work. And I said no, and they refuse to pay for the service they used. Then I went to the manager and told him to get the money from them. He said 'they will give your money if you say ok to their offer'

when he said this, I was angry and kick him with a sprite glass and he fired me. And after the employer heard the case, they took me back to the hotel.

In addition, one participant (Banchi) supplemented that she was not only fearful of losing her job, but fearful for her life. In relation to sexual abuse outside the workplace, Banchi, a hotel waitress, provides her experience from a customer as follows:

I get stabbed by a knife. He was drunk and asked me to be with him that night. I refused his offer. It was in the night around 4 o'clock. He waited for me outside the hotel and when I went to my house, he forcefully stopped me and pushes me to the ground and stabbed my knee.

Moreover, some customers even touch the feminine body of waitresses. Other waitresses also shared their story that some customers try to manipulate them for temporary sexual interests. This approach, considering the economic incapability of waitresses, will have a greater impact on the wellbeing of waitresses including the potential being to be infected by HIV/AIDS.

Related with labor abuse, absence of clearly defined boundaries and fluid expectation of roles is discussed by waitresses. Based on the information collected from different waitresses, labor abuse is an extremely common practice in the study sites. As the data shows, labor abuse can be seen from two angles. The first one is forcing waitresses to do additional tasks other than being a waitress. Beletu and Tiringo, a cafeteria and restaurant waitresses respectively, explain that waitresses labor in hotels, cafeterias, and restaurants is abused starting from the day they start the job. Waitresses are hired to serve food and drinks, but they are forced to wash dishes, chairs, clean the floor and to wash blankets. This results little to no time for breaks and leaves the workers tired. Birtukan, a cafeteria waitress adds:

Other than being a waitress, cleaning dishes and other cafeterias material have been common and are normalized. So, in many hotels, cafes, or restaurants the employers will not hire cleaners assuming that waitresses will cover it up. They didn't tell me what my job boundary is, and I didn't get paid for other things I do.

Other dimension of this abuse is that workers are also asked to work extra hours without any extra payment or benefit. Based on the response from Senait and Beletu, a hotel and cafeterias waitresses respectively, waitresses are also obliged to work the whole day without additional salary. While Senait, an 18 year old girl, is working as a full time waitress without overtime salary, Beletu says "normally we work for eight hours but sometimes we also work a full day and there is no extra payment for our overtime work."

Participant of the study provide the reasons for the existence of labor abuse in the workplace. The first one is absence of clear roles and responsibilities that describes what a waitress should and shouldn't do. Because there is no available alternative job opportunity in the other sector of the economy, the workers continue to work despite problems they face in their work. Even though waitresses explain that they know their labor is being abused, they can't do anything about it.

As discussed in literatures, waitresses work environment is emotionally labor abusive. There is a common saying in hospitality sector that "customer is a king" in which waitresses are expected to treat all customers with smile, irrespective of the behavior and reaction of customers. A hotel waitress, Meklit, shared a story on how hard their job is in relations to being emotional labor abusive as:

It doesn't matter whether customers are good or bad. For every customer we face, in this sector, we are expected to treat them with happiness and smile on our face, keeping whatever, we feel inside. It's very hard to hide your bad feelings inside and at the same time, put a smile in your face, even though, you have been treated badly.

Data from multiple participant waitresses revealed that emotional labor abuse is also found to be related with sexual harassment. In the process of serving and treating customers with different behavior, showing good face or treatment is expected from waitresses and in the process, customers interpret waitresses' approach differently and this opens the way for sexual harassment. The existence of emotional labor abuse in waitress's relationship with their manager and co-workers is also common as the research confirms. A hotel waitress, Meklit, provides a clear explanation on how emotional labor abuse is challenging in her relationship with other groups surrounding her as follows:

Some customers complain without sound justification. Some customers refuse to accept the order while others leave the hotel after giving orders. Some customers leave the hotel without paying for the service they used. And this thing makes you feel sad and sometimes I lose hope and even want to quit my job. When you become a waitress whether you like it or not, you have to communicate with every workers and you need patience while communicating and taking orders from them. The manager shouts and complains because he is not satisfied with our performance. Some waitresses want to be seen as better than you and sometimes initiate you for a fight.

They take everybody's blame like when a mistake is done in the kitchen the customers complain, shout and insult waitresses which is not their fault. Bethelhem, a cafeteria waitresses added:

I have seen a manager shout and insult a co-worker waitress resulted from customers complain about the quality of food and drink. It is not her fault at all rather is the problem of those in the kitchen, but customers and managers only criticize and insult waitresses.

Verbal abuse is also found to be a common practice in the sector where waitresses are being abused by customers, managers and even by their co-workers. Banchi and Meklit, hotel waitresses, stressed that if the customers complain the managers don't want to know the reason and they just shout and insult waitresses. According to Tigist, a restaurant waitress, verbal abuse is common in the work setting where insult from customers is a common tradition. From the researchers' observation and waitress's explanation, verbal abuse is a common experience in different hotels, restaurants, and cafeterias. In relation to how she experienced verbal abuse both by customers and her manager in the workplace, Meklit describes:

Two female customers who came from Addis Ababa ordered me service and then after finishing the service they told me to bring a bill. So, I bring the bill, but they become angry and complain by saying "we need two bills since it will be covered by an organization we work" and then they even call the manager and told him as if I am the one making the mistake. The manager asks for apology and the manager and customers shout and insult me; he doesn't even want to listen what I want to say. I feel lonely but I can't do anything about it.

In relation to this, Birtukan shared her story as:

One day, a customer came and order and I served him what he want and lastly he said “ I am not comfortable with this service” ...he already eat half of the food...and I told him that “ why you eat the order if you don’t like it?” and he said “I am not paying for this” and we take it too seriously and he start to shout and insult me and because I don’t have the ability to force him to pay , I inform to the manager and the manager told him that if he not going to pay the waitress are the one who are going to pay for it and let him pay for the service he took.

A restaurant waitress, Emebet, also witnesses that she and other waitresses have faced verbal abuse from their co-workers resulted from disagreement in handling customers and when some waitresses spread both false rumors about other waitresses’ lives.

Physical Health Problems

Many women who work in this industry are also expected to work hard for an extended hours that resulted for different health related challenges for waitresses. Waitresses have described that their job as physically demanding due to shortage of waitresses, working additional tasks, working additional hours, and rules of the house like forbidding waitress to sit. Whereas Birtukan and Melat, cafeteria waitresses, explain that they feel physical pain when they serve for an extended hours standing and traveling for outdoor service. Waitresses job being physically labor intensive have brought physical health challenges that includes shaking their legs, kidney pain, back pain, headache, and feeling tired. Helen elaborates the conditions as follows:

There is a lack of waitress in the hotel that I am working. So, we are expected to work hard and cover the gap. We complained for the manager to hire new waitresses. But he said that the owner is not willing to do so. In addition, many customers went to the six floors, which is the last floor of the hotel. Serving all those customers is very tiresome since most of the time the elevator didn’t work, and we are expected to walk up to the six floor. All these things make me feel tired, problem to my leg and back pain.

Work-Family conflict is another work-related challenge shared by waitresses. Meklit and Tiringo have discussed how the job affects their familial relationship. Meklit, a hotels waitress shares her experience as; “I don’t have a relationship with my family for a long time. They forced me to stop the job. But I can’t sit home. At least I must provide for myself.” In the process of trying to explain how difficult the job is for familial relationship, Tiringo, a restaurant waitress says:

I leave the house because I always get fight with my stepmother. And after sometime they heard that I am working in a restaurant and they consider the job as being a prostitute and my father told me that he doesn’t want to see my face.

Fearing the reaction of her family, Emebet, a restaurant waitress, didn’t even tell her family that she is a waitress. She explains her situation as:

I leave my birthplace by telling my family as if I am going to study in Bahirdar city. I have to earn some money and I started working in this restaurant. My

family doesn't know that I am a waitress. What they know is that I am still studying. This job is not something appreciated as it makes women vulnerable for many problems. My relationship with my family will be in trouble if they know I am working here.

Low Wage

The other work-related challenges are low wage. Except for a three-star hotel waitresses, who gets a relatively better salary (40 dollar monthly), salaries of waitresses in other settings is very low that the minimum is 13.3 dollar while the maximum is 15.5 dollar a month. This is not enough to cover the rent let alone food and clothing and waitresses complain that their salary is very low compared to what they are doing. In relation to waitresses' wage, a restaurant waitress, Emebet, has shares his experience as follows:

Honestly speaking, there is no good payment for this work in Amhara region. I have friends who work as a waitress in other cities, and they are being paid good compared to me. Generally, better payments are available in cities like Addis Ababa, Debrezeit and Hawassa. Mostly, our managers get good payment whereas waitresses working under low status didn't get enough payment.

Furthermore, waitress's salary doesn't have an increment procedure as they stay in the workplace. Beletu, a 19 year old cafeteria waitress says, "the salary is very low. In addition, the government takes some of it as an income tax and for pension. Furthermore, unintentionally breaking glasses or being late for work will result in a deduction of our income."

Among the reasons for low salary, existence of too many unemployed youths and the absence of minimum wage proclamations for hospitality workers in general and for waitresses are emphasized by waitresses. Even though many countries have a minimum wage for hospitality or food service workers including the Regulation of Wages in Kenya (2017), South Africa's National Minimum Wage Act (2018) and Hospitality Industry Wage Order in New York State, Ethiopia does not have a minimum wage act for private workers in general and hospitality employees.

Other challenges that waitresses face in relation to their salary is unequal payment for the same job. Problem related to equal payment is explained clearly by a hotel waitress Helen, that even if there is a service charge that will be distributed for every worker in the hotel some gets higher than others even between waitresses too.

In a hotel that I work there is service charge. From every customer's order, 10% service charge is deducted. The manager told us that that service charge will be distributed monthly for all of us. But, at the end of the month we don't get an equal share of the service charge with other employees.

Coping Mechanisms

Participant waitresses of this study explains that they work collaboratively when there is too much workload particularly when there is too many customers in a place that a waitress is assigned. Other waitresses will take orders from customers and provide services to help the waitress overloaded and that continues every day for other waitresses too. In relation to covering each other's shift, which is a common practice in the research site, waitresses, when facing urgent personal and familial issues cover each other's shifts. Since managers do not give

leave days for waitresses, waitresses and their co-workers manage this challenge by their own. Tiringo, a restaurant waitress, describes how she is covering her co-workers shift as:

My friend, who is working with me, went to a rural area church for a spiritual visit and to get baptized for one week. Up to now I have covered three days and I will cover the remaining four days until she come back. She will do the same for me as well. This is a common experience that we do when we face issues like hers and other things too.

Regarding managers as sources of coping for waitresses' labor-intensive job, except for those waitresses in a three-star hotel, the finding shows that waitresses in hotel, cafeterias and restaurants get support from their managers when there is too much workload. In addition to helping them by taking and providing orders, as Haymanot, a restaurant waitress describes, their manager let them take a few minutes break by covering their place.

Waitresses use different defense mechanisms to protect themselves from sexual abuse. As a coping, Beletu, a waitress in a cafeteria says that she put a ring in her finger so that customers will think she is married, and they will not harass her. Other coping mechanisms in relation to sexual harassment include waitresses letting their place covered by their co-workers.

Moreover, waitresses have different coping strategies for their low salary. The sources of their coping are customers, the rules of the house they are working and other working places. Tips are an important factor for waitresses to wait in the same house for an extended period in the presence of low salary. Tiringo, a restaurant waitress, explains that:

My salary is only 600 ETB (13.33\$). But if I get 50-birr (1.11\$) tip in a day it means I will get 1500 ETB (3.33\$) which is far more than the employer pays me as a salary. Honestly, most of the waitresses working in this sector didn't get enough payment, what they really care is the tip they get from customers.

Furthermore, according to Meklits response, their manager takes order from foreigners when they are unable to communicate with them. In addition, Emebet describes that she and co-workers use the tips they receive for personal expenses since they don't get their salary on a pre-determined time.

Discussion

This qualitative study aimed to provide deeper insight about the work-related abuse and its coping mechanisms in vulnerable working environment. Sexual abuse includes unwanted sexual comments on waitresses' body, sexual advances, forceful touching on private parts, physical attempts to kiss and attempt rape, invitation for sexual engagement and employers forcing them to comply with customers sexual wishes (Giuffre & Williams, 1994; Middlemiss, 2011). In line with studies conducted in USA (Eaton, 2004; McLaughlin et al., 2012), regarding the perpetrators of sexual harassment, customers are the major perpetrators of sexual harassment though managers/supervisors engage in sexual harassment or facilitate harassment of waitresses in different ways. The consumption of alcohol is described in other study as a cause for the existence of sexual harassment (Hoel & Einarsen, 2003). From this, we can expect that waitresses who work in hotels might experience more sexual abuse than those working in cafeterias and restaurants.

Studies have confirmed that the sector as a sexually objectifying environment for waitresses (Hasbrouck, 2018; Szymanski & Mikorski, 2017; Tavora & Rubery, 2013). Waitresses are presented as a sex object for customers who then stare, comment, and evaluate

them (Szymanski & Mikorski, 2017). The absence of alternative jobs for waitresses and the existence of high rate of unemployment in the study area keep waitresses in sexually objectifying work environment.

Waitresses are expected to perform tasks that are physically tiring. They are expected to work for hours covering two to three shifts with large customer size (Burton & Piercy, 2013) and with multiple tasks that include customer service, cleaning and delivering food to different places (Hasbrouck, 2018). This finding is similar with other literatures that waitresses work is physically demanding with high workload (Williams & Horodnic, 2018) that results an experience of physical health challenges like back pain, kidney, and leg related problems.

Waitresses explain how hard their job is in relation to being emotional labor abusive. Waitresses' job demands high emotional labor that they are expected to show smile and treat every customer with comfort (Hasbrouck, 2018; Li et al., 2016). Waitresses in the study are expected to tolerate the physical demand of their job as well as the sexual and verbal harassment they always experience and demonstrate happy and welcoming gestures. Emotional labor is used as a strategy for service quality, branding, and increased profitability (Li, Canziani, & Barbieri, 2016).

Waitresses are screamed at, insulted by customers, managers, and other waitresses (Korczyński & Evans, 2013). Most of the time, the insults and putdowns are not caused by any fault of the waitresses rather they are projected by customers for any fault in the working area and by managers (Burton & Piercy, 2013).

Physical health related challenges are shared by waitresses like back pain, problem with their leg and kidney. These complexities are resulted from workplace abuse against waitresses which will bring an overwhelming effect on their safety, health, and well-being (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; WHO, 2018). Similar with this study findings, musculoskeletal problems are common (Saarni & Tamminen-Peter, 1987; Salleh et al., 2017) among workers in catering is common that they feel pain in their upper and lower back, knee, upper limbs and shoulder (Salleh et al., 2017). Waitresses job is very labor demanding that will contribute for experience of musculoskeletal symptoms like back pain (Lee et al., 2013).

Traditionally, women have taken care of the home to raise children and now they are participating at workforce (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2010). Failure of the family to accept this change results in work-family conflict which is being experienced by waitresses in the study area. This work-family conflict has negative impact for waitresses' relaxation and social relationships as well (Zhao et al., 2014).

The other problem waitresses face is poor payment or under payment (Hasbrouck, 2018). The finding shows that except for those waitresses in a three-star hotel who earns 40 dollars monthly in the settings of the study, waitresses receive a monthly income of between 13.3 to 15.5 dollar. As indicated in other study, wage in the hospitality sector is very low (Tavora & Rubery, 2013). Waitresses are not paid for their overtime work, weekend work or for holidays. Their vulnerability (being women, youth and without any certified formal training) makes them undesirable for other jobs. Culturally, women are assigned only in specific occupations and the oversupply of women labor in a market with low demand contributes for the low wage of women in the work environment (Grybaite, 2006).

The FDRE Youth Policy (2004) describes that among youths, female is given special attention to participate and benefit in economic activities (Gebremaria, 2017). The policy's implementation didn't reach to the right of waitresses. Contrary to ILOs Equal Remuneration Convention (1951) which Ethiopia ratified with the intention of promoting equal remuneration for the same work, waitresses in the study area are not getting equal payment with their male counter parts. Even though the practice is the opposite one, national labor proclamation 377/2006 obliges for working contract, termination of employment, wages including overtime

payment, waitresses' wages are being taken/ and delayed by their employers and are not getting payment for overtime work.

According to explanation occupational crowding theory by Grybaite (2006) culturally women are assigned only in specific occupations and the oversupply of women labor in a market with low demand contributes for the low wage of women in the work environment. This explanation can clearly explain waitresses of the study area that it can be one of the major reasons why wage is low in hospitality sector since, according to CSA (2012), the unemployment rate for youth is much higher than the other groups, and young waitresses don't have a choice but to work in a labor abusive sector with low wage.

Consistent with literatures of Igbojekwe (2017) to cope with their work-related challenges, waitresses reporting their problem to managers and getting assistance from their co-workers are discussed. To cope their low wage, waitresses use tips from customers and putting rings on their finger is mentioned to cope unwanted sexual advances. Studies indicated that waitresses in restaurants and hotels who used alcohol; some of them used it to get away from their challenges in the workplace (Belhassen & Shani, 2012; Fernandez-Esquer & Diamond, 2013). However, this result indicated that most of the waitresses didn't drink alcohol. This result can be justified by the cultural difference of the study area where alcoholism is considered as a man's business.

Conclusion and Implications

Waitresses are working in an abusive environment where they are subjected to sexual harassment, physical health problems, emotional abuse, verbal, physical abuse, work-family conflict, and low wage. As coping mechanisms, waitresses reporting to their manager, getting help from co-workers and managers, tipping, and wearing fake rings are mentioned.

To address the complexity of workers in the hospitality sector, particularly that of waitresses, a governing policy for the sector must be developed. The labor proclamation 377/2006 which intends to address the issues of waitresses as well should be implemented on the ground. The government must make sure ILOs Equal Remuneration Convention (1951) is implemented. A minimum wage for workers in the hospitality sector common in Kenya, South Africa and other states should be developed to protect the interest of employees in general and waitresses in particular.

Labeling women and their job as inferior must be addressed. As explained in occupational crowding theory (Grybaite, 2006) structural forms of discrimination (Fleming, 2015) or systematically forcing women to dominate in the hospitality sector while ignoring their participation in other economic sector has a paramount impact to women, their family, and the country. The study findings are in line with Grybaite (2006) explanation of occupational crowding theory that in addition to assigning lower wages for occupations like hospitality industry that women dominate in number, high amount of women workforce supply with little demand in the market exacerbate the situation and the surplus supply of women labor contributes for wage to become lower.

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List of Abbreviations: AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome; CSA: Central statistics authority; ETB: Ethiopian Birr; FDRE: Federal democratic Republic of Ethiopia; GO: Government Organization; HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus; ILO: International labor organization; IRB: Institutional Review Board; NGO: Non-government Organization; SH: Sexual Harassment; WSH: Workplace Sexual Harassment

Availability of Data and Materials: All dataset used and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to confidentiality issue but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request through email address of yenealemkidus@gmail.com

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