

## Illuminating the Life Experience and Meaning of a Sexually Abused Adolescent Housemaid in Ethiopia: A Visit by a Nightmare

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### Abstract

The life experiences and meanings of being a sexually abused adolescent housemaid were examined using a case study method. Semi-structured interviews and paired-discussion with one informant was conducted to generate the data. The investigator chose a single case from Mekelle Tigray Ethiopia using an inclusion criteria that had undergone sexual harassment owing to the circumstances that such groups are destined to live under the mercy of their employers and are liable to render every services required by their bosses against their interest. Findings indicated that the teenage housemaid was vulnerable in many ways such as perceived lack of marital opportunity, depression, and fear of male counterparts, fear of death, sexual harassment, sexual-related problems (HIV/AIDS), and stigma. The vulnerability to the sexual harassment was so serious it left an indelible psychological scar and sense of hopelessness on the part of the victim. The existing practices and conditions of the victim/housemaid had adversely affected her as she has no control over the events and care and support was not available to her. The study illustrates that the loss of her virginity has negatively impacted the psychosocial experiences of the teenage housemaid and was accompanied by low self-esteem, anxiety, grief, neglect and loss of her job. These findings can be used as preliminary data supporting additional research to further explore the life experiences of housemaids who may be sexually abused by their employer or employers. Last, the investigators concluded that since the experience of such housemaid servants is not yet known in the entire region conducting a survey study would further contribute to deeply understand the problem and safeguard these groups from the double jeopardy they are currently faced with.

**Keywords:** Housemaid; Teenage; Sexual abuse; Life experience; Illuminating; Adolescence

### Abbreviations:

CYFWO: Children Youth and Family Women Office; ACPF: Africa Child Policy Forum

### Introduction

Ethiopia is one of the most populous and least developed countries in the world due to interrelated and complex socio-economic factors including manmade and natural calamities. A large portion of its population, especially children, are victimized by social evils like famine, disease, poverty, mass displacement, lack of education, and family instability [1].

Child wellbeing means a lot of things primarily, it is about children being secured, healthy and happy; about having opportunities to grow, to learn and know and by far it is about positive personal and social relationships and about being and feeling safe, secured and respected. It is fundamentally about freedom from violence, abuse, at home, the community and country at large. It is all about the full and harmonious development of each child's personality, skills and talents. All of these have a better chance of being achieved in societies and states that are ruled by the principle of good governance and that uphold both in law and practice the best interest of the child that implies respecting, protecting, nurturing and realizing the rights of the child to shape

his/her own life as he/she grows and develops the African Child Policy Forum [2].

Cognizant of the above fact, there are many poor, displaced, unaccompanied, and abandoned children in Ethiopia. A considerable number of these children work and live in poor conditions in their struggle for survival and to support their parents' meager income, or support themselves with the small income they earn doing menial jobs; while doing so these children face the danger of falling in to the hands of employers, traffickers, violence, and hard labor. As a result, they are exploited, and are forced to drop out of school and some drift into begging, or petty crimes [3,4].

According to a UNICEF report regarding Ethiopia (2006), children up to the age of 18 years comprise 50% of the population of the country and 20% of them live in extremely difficult circumstances. They are exposed to a lot of danger, disease, and exploitation. These children include, housemaid children or teens, homeless children, orphans, trafficked victims, and those with HIV/AIDS, abused, and neglected child workers, destitute children with or without families, street children, prostitutes, and juvenile delinquents. The Child Friendly Rehabilitation/Treatment Guidelines for sexually abused, and exploited children by the MoWCYA estimated that nearly about 3000 thousand children are sexually abused in Ethiopia annually with a considerable number remain unreported [2].

Owing to the risks sexually abused housemaid children face in the present situation of Ethiopia, protection of such children is critically important [5]; Save the Children, [6-8]. Hence, there is a pressing need in such an environment to address all aspects of children's rights in

order to be able to reach out to children in crisis. One group of children in crisis includes the victims of child sexual abuse. This multilayered child rights violation requires focus and innovative solutions through the relevant bodies.

Consistent with this in many parts of the world, the problem of sexual abuse is a frightening reality. The results are often tragic. Sexual abuse is an issue of international concern and in the under developing countries such practice is widely observed in the form of rape, domestic violence, incest, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and sexual abuse hence, it is imperative and more relevant to raise such issues as a point of concern [9].

In Ethiopia child sexual abuse is not a recent phenomenon and has received considerable attention over the years [2]. Sexual abuse is a sexual interaction that occurs against one's will through the use of physical force, threat of force, pressure, use of alcohol/drugs, or use of position of authority [10].

The intention of this study builds up a case from the observation of the researchers in the geographic region there is no any law that governs of the market of house maid servants. It is up to the employer and broker to decide if one wants to hire them. If in case both reached an agreement particularly on the pay the housemaid is made to accompany the employer without any precondition of the duration of the contract, the workload, the family condition, the skill required and the terms of medication and so on.

Due to these gaps many house maids end up mistreated, like to work for many relatives of their employer, neighbor or their associated at times. To the worst some employers do not care for their servants even if they observe some sexual advances by their sons, family members or themselves considering that the housemaids are there to render any kind of service of their owners in demand, "humans as sex objects absolutely fits here" [11].

According to Elliot [12], sexual abuse is far more likely to be carried out by someone a child knows, such as a relative or friend of the family, than by a stranger. Sometimes older children abuse younger children. Sherman and Donovan [13] indicated that sexually abused children face trauma, anxiety and social-emotional difficulties. Sexual abuse is associated with a number of negative consequences such as higher risk for aggressive behavior, low self-esteem, depression, low academic achievement, and risk of substance abuse [14,15]. Sexually abused girls are also more likely to experience teenage pregnancy, have a high number of sexual partners in adulthood, are more likely to acquire sexually transmitted infections and experience forced sex [16].

In response, the African Child Policy Forum [2] Article 19 stipulated that state parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of a parent, legal guardian or school authorities or any other person who has the care of the child.

Despite this there is an increase in the number of reported cases. The most recent data by the Children, Youth and Family Women Office [17] in Ethiopia estimates there are around 4.04 million abused, orphaned, disabled, neglected, unaccompanied and abandoned children.

The kind of abuse reported by the victims by Belay [18] in Addis Ababa included: touching genitals; oral sex; penetration with objects; sucking breasts; forced mutual masturbation, intercourse and a

combination of beating and sexual abuse. It has taken so long for people to recognize that children are sexually abused, that sexual abuse has been placed in the context of male power and aggression theory. Women are not supposed to be sexually aggressive and the theory eliminates them as possible abusers, unless they are coerced males [19].

According to Belay [18] study made in the capital most abusers are family members or are well-known to those they abuse, with abuse taking place in either the child's home or that of the abusers. Howe's (2000) research in India has shown that fewer than 10 percent of abused children are abused by strangers.

In one study on sexual abuse in Ethiopia an 18 year-old respondent reported that "in our community, house servants are sexually exploited by employers or male members of the family and at the same time could not stay out of home after 8 pm or they could face sexual violence" [20]. As a consequence, among the victims, early forced sex is associated with lower self-esteem, higher levels of depression, running away from home, alcohol and drug use, and more sexual partners [21].

An excerpt from the case study of [5] a young girl who was sexually molested gives an image of what some girls undergo:

When Yeshi was 16 years old her cohabitant sexually harassed her forcefully. When she was asleep he pulled and grabbed her. He threatened her that if she did not comply and told anybody about, he would do to the possible extent of murder and this experience is instilled in her mind as a black dot still.

Only a handful of studies [5,6,18] have specifically examined the prevalence and magnitude of sexual abuse among domestic house servants in Ethiopia. The scarcity of information on sexual violence of female house-maid is regrettable because it is the sort of evidence needed to help them heal from such traumatic experience, help others who have had similar experience, and educate the public at large.

The problem of child sexual abuse is a commonly heard complaint by social work practitioners in Ethiopia [6]. The investigator of the present study has also experienced that in Ethiopia females are among the oppressed. Housemaids are the most vulnerable to such kind of assaults.

Therefore, this study attempts to contribute to the knowledge base by exploring the life experiences and meaning of being a sexually abused teenage housemaid through a case study involving the investigator in conducting the pair discussion with the victim a vacant room to make things confidential. The reason why the researcher involved himself in the data gathering was that since the victim may share sensitive issue and in order to step into her inner most to narrate the story and present her accounts in a plausible manner. The study examined the direct effect of the assault in the life and dignity of the subject or the victim in this case at length. As a result, the present study will inspire other researchers to further look into the phenomena and address the voices of these special groups in the long run either through a longitudinal or survey study in the identified geographic region.

## Materials and Methods

### Research design

The single instrumental case-study approach was employed to examine the experiences and meanings of a sexually abused teenage

housemaid. This approach gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied within a limited time frame in greater depth to understand the factors associated to the problem at hand and thus illuminate the lived experience of the victim from own experience [22]. The investigator had arranged a time frame and 13 interview questions and the questions were first pilot tested on a similar case to ensure the validity of the questions and estimate the time. Based on the pilot testing the interview questions were modified and some items deemed vague were deleted. The informant of this case-study was asked to describe her educational background starting from primary school up until the time she quit her schooling, her experiences of being sexually assaulted, and the meanings she attached to sexual molestation. In this sense [23] highlighted context (background) of the informant provides great power for understanding and making prediction about the problem, thus enough interview questions that draw good impression of the background were included.

The reason why the investigator relied to interviewing was because Wiseman and Aron (1972) liken interviewing to a fishing expedition like fishing, interviewing is an activity requiring careful preparation, much patience and considerable practice if the eventual reward is to be a worthwhile catch. Yin [24] case studies that came out of the “in-depth interview” can provide information that a written response can conceal. What is worth mentioning in this connection is that it is the researcher himself who acted as data gatherer for his own curiosity on one hand and to meticulously compose, record and jot down the information from the subject on the other.

An instrumental case study method was employed because it is most preferable to explore specific and defined circumstances of a phenomenon at hand in-depth and in greater detail [25]. Most importantly, the choice of a single case rather than multiple cases was also based on Creswell's [25] recommendation. The study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis; and the more cases an individual studies, the less the depth in any single case. The key informant was allowed to talk about what was of central significance to her rather than to the interviewer [22].

### Sample selection

For this study the single sample was drawn out of the sexually abused house maids in Mekelle. The single case was included in the study based on the report of the broker in that locality who knows such group of individuals who experienced such scenarios and who shared him of such occurrences while they were in the service of their employers. In this vein, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the informant for the study. Purposive sampling enables the researchers to make informed decisions about sampling to allow the right focus and access to sufficient data pertinent to the phenomena under study [26].

Mekelle in the northern part of Ethiopia was selected as a research site for the study because of the availability of many housemaids as compared to other towns of the region.. Mekelle , the capital of the Tigray region and the largest city in Northern Ethiopia is fast becoming an economic hub and education center and opportunities in tourism thus in attraction of many people seeking better employment opportunity, and life style.

Owing to this the majority of the house servant brokers' offices are located in in the capital the most notable is “Edaga Soni”. This location was also selected based on the prevalence of reports of sexual abuse for example the broker confirmed and shared to the researcher that daily

one servant leaves or interrupts its contractual agreement mainly for reasons of sexual abuse. Before doing the data gathering we first came across the broker who act as a gatekeeper for the research in his office and asked him if he could take some time to discuss about the project.

After getting his consent we immediately briefed him that we needed to interview a housemaid who has a history of sexual abuse by her employer. We also reminded the gatekeeper of the inclusion criteria based on the concept of theoretical sampling [25]. The informant should be a female Tigringa speaker, within the age range of 12-18, who served as a housemaid for at least three years, who had the experience of sexual abuse by her employer and was willing to share her experience.

After three days we met the gatekeeper and asked if he could introduce us with the informant for the study who fulfilled the above inclusion criteria. Following the greeting and introducing one another with the participant we moved to a nearby tea room for chatting. We explained the purpose of our study and requested her consent to participate in the study with an understanding that she could decline to participate at any time during the study in case if she feels a discomfort any harm against her. We explained that the interview would be confidential and there was no risk of harm as a result of being a participant in the study. She agreed to devote her time for the consecutive interviews. The informant signed the informed consent form, and arranged a time and place for the interview session in a location that felt comfortable to the informant which was in the broker's office. We also paid him 60 Ethiopian birr for the overall service he rendered us. Besides, the informant received 100 Eth. birr as compensation of her time after the interview (about \$ 7 USD).

### Data collection

The data collection process was done within one week frame from February 12 to 21, 2014. The data collection occurred until such a time as theoretical saturation was achieved. A semi-structured interview guide consisting of 13 questions was used to collect the data. The guide was developed to solicit the informant's background information focusing mainly on her earlier life story, her experience of the abuse as a housemaid, and the meaning she attached to being a sexually abused housemaid. Great care was given to obtain the necessary information and proceed with the interview as long as the informant was comfortable to give out what she deemed proper to the posed items.

The interviews were tape-recorded, and translated from Tigrigna to English. Observation notes were also compiled as daily process recorded. Then, the interviews were transcribed verbatim word for word with greater care and objectivity to safeguard and minimize distortion and subjectivity of the interpreters.

### Data analysis

First and foremost to analyze the data, the recorded transcripts, observation and process notes were read, reread and reviewed thoroughly. After reviewing the full transcript (data set), the researchers closely examined potential patterns to see what findings actually emerged out of the data set. Then, a precise of each interview (first, second and third) was created. Following this, thematic categories were developed from the data. Having determined the emergent themes, attempts were made to answer the study questions which revolve around the three themes of background experience, the experience of being sexually abused, and the meaning of being a sexual abused housemaid. After completing the analysis and the first draft of

the report, the results were reviewed and compared to the raw data. Finally, the report was given to two peers for review of consistency of the interpretation. Peer comments were then incorporated. The researchers also gave a chance for the informant in a debriefing session to authenticate whether the interpretation and analysis of the data is in compliance of her own information. The informant then honestly confirmed that “yea” it is in line with her own reports during the data collection phase. Through these processes, the investigators aimed to present an accurate representation of the informant’s story as is clearly presented in the results section.

## Results

### Background of the informant

Trihas (fictitious name) is now an 18 year old woman living in Mekelle near the University specifically known as “Mai-Degene.” She is an employee of a certain civil servant middle income earner. Trihas came to Mekelle four years ago from a rural area called Hawzen which is some 90 Km away from Mekelle the city of the regional state of Tigray.

Trihas’s educational background was at short as she interrupted her schooling in standard three due to the death of her mother who was suffering from chronic breast cancer. Tirhas felt that she could not continue having the responsibility of taking care of her father and annoying stepmother who usually created discomfort for her. She was forced to run away from her hometown to Mekelle at the age of 14.

Trihas described her schooling and background as miserable and full of tragedy. To begin with her educational progress was poor as she was devoted fully to household activities, collecting wood, cooking food, and fetching water from far distances as she is from a broken home after the death of her mother. She also took over the responsibility of her mother up until the arrival of her stepmother. Tirhas found the stepmother as troubling as her father. Her father required her to do everything in the house as per the recommendations of the new comer step mother without hesitations and to not take rest on her own out of the permission of the step mother, to the worst the step mother always quarreled Tirhas about minor errors, and complained to the father about some facts she failed to cover during the day although that failure can be justified to the much work overload at the given time. The stepmother was always making intrigues. For example, she told the father that Trihas does not give her due respect, that she was unhappy with after her arrival and defied some of her orders as a pretext for forcing Tirhas to run away from home.

Although Tirhas’s aspiration was to finish her high school while she was with her family and be capable of supporting herself things turned out the reverse: firstly, she is from a broken home, secondly her step-mother is hostile, thirdly her father was unsupportive, and indifferent to all her grievances. As a result, she could not realize her dreams and wishes and was forced to make a decision to run away from home than remain a double jeopardy of her father and crude step mother. Owing to this, she was destined to be a housemaid where she faced several problems including the sexual abuse as well as psychological, social and behavioral problems as a result of the abuse.

Tirhas also described how irritating it is to be a housemaid for she has no option to help herself, attend her education, and avoid the abuse of her employer elicited through oral sex, indecent touching, and sexual advances. Tirhas believed that, had it not been for the death of

her mother and ending up in a broken home; she would not had to expose herself to such kind of experiences, and miserable life at this very early age.

### The Experiences and Consequences of Being Sexually Abused: The Context

Tirhas perceived sexual abuse as sexual harassment by a male perpetrator without the consent of the victim so as to entertain ones interest and going against the interest of the subject. Tirhas’s employer was a bachelor civil servant whose personality was characterized as kind and innocent. However, as some times he would get drunk and visit her room unwillingly but one day as not usual he all of a sudden grabbed her forcefully without her consent and both fall down to her own bed but as she threatened him that she will scream loudly during that evening he left the room and rushed to his own. He also prohibited her from getting out of the house to chat with the neighbors or to ask for any help from them. Although Tirhas was his maid and she is there to serve and support him in terms of household activities, he gradually showed her a sexual enticement by touching, kissing, and oral sex and visiting her room.

One evening Tirhas said:

My employer came into my bedroom as if he seek something and suddenly grabbed me fiercely and molested me even though I told him and warn him I will cry loudly; to leave me since it is not my interest; that he is doing it against my will and it is immoral to sexually abuse one’s housemaid, but, but.... already happened what can I do?.

In addition as: “It is so immoral, disastrous and an woeful when you are enforced to such kind of assault by your employer in which you do not expect out of and trust him too and at the same time you are not with him for that purpose it is very irritating and indelible scar in my life”.

After the assault Tirhas was feeling unhelpful, gloomy and desperate enough thinking of the consequences of sexual abuse as she was being stigmatized by the community, lost her virginity which reduces chances to get married, exposed to different sexual related problems such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDS), fistula and other psychological, social and behavioral problems that caused her difficulty in adjustment. She is then a double victim. On one hand, she is a female and suffers from all ills that emanate from the gender imbalance and she is oppressed as a result of being a housemaid that does not have control of the circumstances in the confined household environment.

As she went on to narrate the overall sexual mistreatment she experienced and especially how that day was; that day is unforgettable absolutely, Tirhas generalized the grudge to all males around her. The event is still inculcated as a shameful scar in her mind. She also underscored that what saddening is that there is no an appealing space for such kind of assaults and the law enforcement system is so poor that there is no defined body for such kind of grievances.

### The meaning of being a sexually abused housemaid

Tirhas speaks about the event of her sexual abuse with regret. She went to the abusers home not for the purpose of sexual matters but to work and serve him for the compensations. But things were reversed. She felt that sexual harassment is disgusting, immoral and deleterious committed against ones will and with no explicit need for such desires. Being a housemaid is also very unfortunate because one’s self-esteem is

endangered since domestic servants are looked down and are under the mercy of the employers and forced to fulfill what they are ordered and thing more.

Tirhas felt angry about her sexual maltreatment and threatened her employer that if she got a chance to take a revenge on him who despised and disgraced her dignity by sexually abusing her that he should have been taken to prison if proper legal procedures have been in place. She uttered it with a feeling of sorrow and desperation that there is nothing any harm beyond looking a guilt person left unpunished or set free without getting what he deserves. She went to express her gruesome feelings word-for-word as follows:

I came into this world as a human-being and I wish to live in the right manner. Being able to move, communicate, to take care of my own needs, to think, to feel... There is no need for me to re-experience unwanted sexual advances, I do not wish to be once again an employee of a bachelor fellow and never think about it.

Though the event happened approximately one year and half before the interview, Tirhas felt that when she remembers the scenario, she is still affected emotionally. She appears to have serious depression manifested by worry, weeping alone, and lack of sleep and fear as well as focus on daily matters.

## Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that Tirhas lost her mother at an early age and was product of a broken home and a dropout. Not having an understanding father and at the same time a supportive stepmother was disappointing. The hostile home environment and experience of the informant having too much work, neglect by the stepmother, poor school performance, and difficult character of her widower father, such as insulting her for minor errors played a negative role for Tirhas. She felt no option but to run away from home and search out a means of survival. The informant felt that being without a mother and becoming the product of a broken home caused her to feel and experience so many grievances at home and outside the home environments of being misery, hungry, desperate, subject to indignities and hopeless. On top of this what is up setting is that there is no anybody who is in charge of hearing such sexual advances that enforces the violators to be accountable for their misdeeds.

The study revealed that Tirhas was exposed to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), sexual maltreatment, and physical abuse, psychological and social problems. As a consequence she was looked down upon and had a low self-esteem and in general she experienced low social functioning, emotional functioning (depression and anxiety) and behavioral problems such as loneliness, and lack of attention on here day to day activity except weeping day and night for he misfortune.

From the study it is also vivid that the experience of sexual abuse from the informant's point of view is deemed to be in the first place, it is a human right transgression, despising, demoralizing and exposing the subject to some other uncontrolled risks and loss of hope.

As a consequence, Tirhas reported that sexual abuse probably made her life more difficult as the sexual molestation has been associated with a variety of factors, including low self-esteem, psychological problems, hopelessness and a perceived lack of future occupational/marital opportunities and being somewhat a social outcast. These findings are consistent with studies Abiy [5], Belay [18] that found many sexually abused women and children are ending up or destined

to be commercial sex workers in the capital city of Addis Ababa. In addition particularly Belay's study underscored that majority of the street children had experienced sexual abuse either by outsiders or by their peers.

The findings on the consequences of sexual abuse by Violence against Children in Ethiopia [20] revealed that the experiences of being sexually abused are associated with outcomes such as lack of self-confidence, fear, vagrancy, stigmatization, birth related problems, HIV and other STD infections, permanent hopelessness, reduced chance and opportunity in the future and being desperate and unethical.

## Conclusion

This case study was conducted mainly to provide an in-depth understanding of the experience and meaning of being a sexually abused housemaid who has been serving a single civil servant for almost three years. It is clear from the findings that being a housemaid is risky and a double victim, in that, the fate of this group in general and the informant in particular is in the hands of others or employers. In addition in the study place there is anybody who stands on behalf of this group to take care after the harassment nor there is no law that prevents them from being falling victims and punishes those perpetrators.

In this case Tirhas, for example, felt that being a housemaid paves the way for many adverse effects of sexual molestation such as, isolation, bearing an unwanted child, being a social outcast, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, hopelessness, and trauma, being stigmatized by the community, and by far exposure to risks of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as a consequence.

The findings are consistent with the local and overseas literature cited such as Woldekidan [27] in Bahirdar; Belay [18] in Addis Ababa, and Mace [28] in the United States documented in relation to the issue of sexual molestation inflicted up on domestic workers. Furthermore, the investigators believed that since the problem is little known hitherto in the city and by far the entire region research is required to build a comprehensive knowledge base on the sexual abuse experience of domestic servants in Ethiopia so that it can inform the stakeholders to take the issue to a further step.

Any research endeavor has limitations. Generalizing from a single case can be very risky. Denscombe [29] makes the point that in case study, generalization is not always possible. The value of the study of a single event can be questioned. The great strength of the case-study method is that it allows concentrating on a specific instance or situation and identifying the various interactive processes at work. The interview method was also used as a data collecting instrument and questions were well devised, refined for their propensity of generating sufficient information but they were not pilot tested in more than one participant due to resource, and time constraints. Besides, the scarcity of previous research on the topic set limits to sufficiently substantiate the findings from related literature.

Though based on a single case, the outcomes of the study illuminate a gray and poorly understood area in the identified geographic region i.e., Mekell, Tigray, Ethiopia. If the study might be expanded in terms of geographic coverage and samples within and outside the region, definitely the results of the present study will have important implications for decision makers in the protection and promotion of human rights; and for social work practitioners who are directly

responsible for the physical wellbeing of these group and besides, the study can serve as a baseline for further research.

## Implications

As elsewhere in the world, in Ethiopia, the number of children in difficult circumstances has increased as manifested by an increase in street children, child labor, child sexual abuse and neglect, juvenile delinquency, child prostitution, teenage pregnancy, and sexual molestation of housemaid and trafficking of children for the sex trade. The problem faced by teenage housemaids is more complex and protracted but in Ethiopia there is a tendency of ignoring the issue even though the problem is growing.

The central theme of this paper is to raise public awareness of the situation at hand by exploring the lived experiences and overall condition of a single case of a teenage housemaid. Other researchers, Governmental and Non-governmental organizations (GOs & NGOs), decision makers, social workers and Ministry of women Affairs staff must address various forms of exploitation of women and girls as a matter of priority and thereby consider some supportive interventions in their programs. In Ethiopia in general and in Mekelle/Tigray in particular housemaids represent the most vulnerable group in society.

The systematic identification and understanding of the problem of this group/segment of society will also expand our horizon of thought and action on the subject. As a matter of fact, this qualitative research study which is the first of its kind in city would also shed some light to what has been gray area pertaining to the experiences, feelings and effects of housemaid sexual molestation from their own point of view in the specific study site.

Finally, there has to be a coordinated effort by this group to establish their own association so that they can combat the problem they face in an organized form and use their voices to liberate themselves from their oppressors. Government and non-government bodies should also give proper attention to this group to empower themselves and stand on by their own foot.

To the knowledge of the researchers the facilitating role of the local NGOs in the locality is very limited in terms of assisting the house maids to organize and establish their own organization so that they will be in a position of safeguarding themselves, from the attack of their employers. Hence, such support services who claim that they are there to serve the marginalized and vulnerable group must think and find ways of rescuing them in one hand and campaign in income generating activity for the victims to get access to education, health and counseling services as well.

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## Statement of Competing Interest

The authors have no competing interest

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