

The Socio-economic Challenges and Opportunities of Waitress in Ambo Town, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to investigate the socio-economic challenges and opportunities of waitresses in Ambo Town, Oromia, Ethiopia.

Methodology: This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Simple random sampling and snowball sampling were used to include participants of the study. Data were collected by questionnaires and interviews. Collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Result: The findings of this research revealed that waitresses face various socio-economic challenges such as workload, low salary, lack of access to education, food, health, etc. Besides, the value given for their work is low. They see their work as lower occupation.

Implication: The implication of this study is that the socio-economic challenges of waitresses need to be solved by concerned bodies.

Novelty: The findings of this study offer some insights into the seriousness of the challenges waitresses are facing in Ethiopia. This study is original in which it investigated the waitresses socio-economic challenges and opportunities in Ambo town. Previous studies concerned on the challenges and opportunities of female domestic workers in accessing education. Others also found that women workers in hotel industries are working in risky and vulnerable settings for sexually harassing behaviors.

Keywords: *waitresses, socio-economy, social capital, challenge, opportunities, hotel industry*

Introduction

Waitress is a woman whose job is to bring foods to customers at their tables in hotels (Cambridge dictionary, 2016). Historically, in the bar, waitressing was reserved to female workers while the higher-status and better-paid work of bartending reserved for male employees (ILO, 2016). Additionally, the arbitrary work rules permitted male employees more flexibility in not only the type of work they performed but also where the work performed. These arbitrary rules sometimes trumped the bar's gender-based division of labour. In examining work rituals of both female waitresses and male bartenders and bouncers, they contend that women's works were subject to "handicap rule" which placed female employees at a disadvantage by permitting male employees to make arbitrary decisions about their work as well as that of female workers (McKether, 2008). Males are also employed in the bar and the restaurants today. The US Bureau of Statics also predicted that waitressing will see employment growth that is slower than the average for all occupation through it is however as the top of a list of carriers that will have most job opening due monthly to the fact that many people will live the field during this decade earning. Waiter and waitress earned a median hourly wage of 8.93 dollars which translate to the median annual salary of 18.570 dollar if one were to work full time (US Bureau of Labor Statics, 2020).

In the United States, the first waitresses during the 1620s worked in taverns. On December 13, 1827, the first restaurant opened in New York and introduced the concept of "eating out." It was during the middle of the nineteenth century when waitressing began. The discussion shifts to the experiences of Frances Donovan, an outsider who posed as a waitress for some time (Owings, 2012). Looking at Japanese historical developments broadly and at Japanese women's history more specifically, the café waitress emerged between the Yoshiwara courtesans and geishas of the pre modern Tokugawa period (1600-1868) and the club hostess of the post-Second World War decades (Tipton, 2002).

Women are highly vulnerable to sexual harassment. This can affect the economic growth of the country. The cost of violence against women ranges from 1.4% to 3.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to recent costing studies within developing country contexts (Fraser et al., 2017). Females in urban are higher risk of violence than others. High-risk groups include migrant workers, domestic workers, health services workers and sex workers.

Hotel industry requires waiters/waitresses who are responsible different roles. These responsibilities are welcoming customers, providing menu, collecting bills, preparing tables, cleaning tales and floors, informing customers day's foods, serve drinks and foods, informing details of orders to the kitchen, etc. Therefore, working in hotels demands waiter/waitresses who provide excellent service to the customers. Hotel industry seeks someone who are patience, good personality and effective communicators. Work conditions should be met for the waitresses. The conditions can be their working time, time to take rest, physical condition such as lighting, place where the waitresses work, hazards that may hart them, etc.

There are some local studies conducted on waitresses. For instance, Belete (2014) conducted a study on the challenges and opportunities of female domestic workers in accessing education. He found that domestic workers in Ethiopia considered as oppressed group of

peoples such as prostitutes, waitress and daily labourers. Fiseha (2018) also conducted women sexual harassment, experiences and coping mechanisms against sexual harassment at hotel industries. He found that women workers in hotel industries are working in risky and vulnerable settings for sexually harassing behaviours. As a result, from a minor form of sexually harassing experience such as unnecessary staring at women workers and gone through some forms of verbal up until force infused physical attack inflicted upon women. These harassing experiences almost happen to them irrespective of their working hours more frequently by young males. This harassment experience severely influenced the women's life ranging from minor mood changes to physical and emotional problems. This might disorganizes their personal and marital life. Moreover, this puts them on a continuous momentum of fear. Besides, their harassing experiences negatively affect their working environment, and it forced them hate their works. There are many problems face waitresses socially and economically. However, little attentions were given to study the socio-economic challenges and opportunities of waitresses.

International studies also conducted on the waitresses' problems. For example, Lynn (2008), May (1978), and Clotildah et al. (2014) conducted on the waitresses regarding tips they earn by serving in the hotels. For instance, Jiang et al. (2014) studied waitresses tips earnings based on their hair colour in a prominent restaurant chain. However, the tips they got could not cover their economic problems. They only emphasized on the economic opportunities and challenges of waitresses. Therefore, this study focuses on the socio-economic challenges and opportunities of waitresses in Ambo Town. This study also focuses on the factors that forced them to engage in the waitressing job.

Review Of Related Literature

Waitress socio-economic challenges

Socio-economy influences social life positively or negatively. It may cause inequality among one's income and wealth. The economic challenges of waitresses are not seem take into consideration. Low-income women cannot afford the live. For instance, they are unable to care their children (United States Agency for International Development, 2018).

Employees' motivation plays significant roles in one's life and success of organization. Nicholson (2003) also observed that the mismatch between the waiter/waitresses motivations and hotel managers commitments. The workers are interested in their work if there is good communication between themselves. This implies that they have positive commitment to the organization (Kalkidan, 2018). In another way, hotels' responsiveness service quality depends on workers of the staff. Without motivating waiters/waitresses, this is not possible.

Waiters/waitresses motivation in hotel industry is significant for success of the organizations. If the waiters/waitresses are motivated to serve in the hotels, their turning over is minimized (Dermody et., 2004). Hotel owners can motivate their waitresses by award money, which can minimize the waitresses' socio-economy (Enz, 2001).

Ethiopia is fastest growing in economy. Social economy has significant role during this economic crisis of the world. Economy of women needs to be empowered. Economy of country is absurd without women empowerment in economy. Ethiopia has experienced significant growth in hotel industry. Hotel industry in Ethiopia currently is growing

(Samrawit, 2015). The industry development created job opportunities especially for women. A woman who works in the hotel or restaurant is called waitress. Hotels in Ethiopia generating social benefits of the waitresses. Hotels are expected to provide good quality of services. Hoteliers can do this only if their workers are satisfied (Samrawit, 2015). In order to compete in hotel industry, it is important to provide quality service for the customers. The quality service may depend on the waiters/waitresses' motivation (Salazar, 2000). Waitressing activities in Ethiopia are associated with several socio-economic challenges, which should be agenda for researches and other concerned bodies. From the researcher personal observations, waitresses in Ethiopian hotels face several challenges. Waitresses are expected to work hard, with low payments.

According to United States Agency for International Development (2018), women face different socio-economic problems globally. For instance, sexual harassment negatively affects women's working conditions, which may negatively affect their socio-economic. Women lag behind men in economic opportunity especially in developing country (Twining, Louise & Zhou, 2017). According to World Bank (2013), women face workplace sexual harassment, which may affect their working conduction even, withdrawing their job. This can affect their socio-economy indirectly. A research by Sunflower Women Workers Centre (2013) indicates that women quit their job because of harassment. A woman who works in hotel, where the service is client-oriented, is at risk of harassment. Emdalkachew (2016) also argues that women's rights in Ethiopia are not properly protected and they are subjected to violence. He calls for women's empowerment in social, economy, and political. The economy of waitresses should be further studies. The motivation behind carrying out this study is to assess the socio-economic challenges of waitresses so as to provide some recommendations to minimize the waitresses' problems.

Research Methodology

Ambo town is the capital city of West Shewa Zone in Oromia Regional State. The city is located 126 km west of Addis Ababa, which is the capital city of Ethiopia. The town was established in 1889 and covers of 8587 hectares of land. It is one of the oldest cities in Ethiopia. The name Ambo came from a lake, which has salt in it. The development of Ambo town is related to the hot spring called "Ambo Tsebel (spa)" (Challa, 2011).

Research Design

This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods employed with a cross-sectional time frame. Qualitative research method was used to get information about the subjects of this study. A descriptive research design was employed in this study to describe the living condition of the waitresses.

Study Population

This study focused on the waitresses who work in the hotel, the bars and the restaurants. The offices of labour and social affair and women and children affair were included in this study to assess the socio-economic challenges and opportunities of the waitresses in the Ambo town.

Sampling Techniques and Sampling Size

This study used mixed method. Simple random sampling is used to avoid some type of bias and to save budget and time. Purposive sampling is used to select informants for interview based on their importance for our study. Three hundred twelve waitresses were selected from 50 cafes. The convenience sampling techniques was used to select those 50 cafes. From these, 20 respondents were randomly selected.

Method of Data Collection

The data were collected through both questionnaires and interviews. Interview is closely structured conversation with people who have knowledge about the topic under investigation. The researcher used this instrument to thrift time and energy.

Tools of Data Collection

Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect necessary data. The questionnaires were self-administered by the respondents to fill it without the interviewer help. The questionnaires included both open-ended and close ended-question. In addition to this, the in-depth interviews were held based on the interview guiding questions. The information from the key informant was recorded and noted.

Methods of Data Analysis

In order to analyze collected data, charts, tables, frequencies, percentages and graphs were used. Interview results were analyzed qualitatively.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher informed the purpose of the study before collecting data for this study. The participants were also told not to write their names on the questionnaires sheets. They were informed that their responses were used only for the research purposes and kept confidential. They were also oriented that the information they gave would not be personalized in any part of the research.

Findings

This chapter deals with presentation, analysis and discussion of collected data. Data collected through questionnaires and interviews from waitresses and governmental organizations are organized, analyzed and presented in this section.

Factors that forced waitresses to engage in hotel working

Table 1: way of entering to this job

Category	Frequency	Percentage
My interest	6	30%
Lack of economy	8	40%
Peer pressure	2	10%
Lack of other work	4	20%
Total	20	100%

Source: field survey, May 2019

The above table indicated that 30% of respondents get into this work by their interests and 40% of respondents get by lack of economy while 10% of respondents get into this job by peer pressures and 20% of respondents get by lack of other work. Majority of the waitresses in this data get into this job due to lack of income.

Table 2: Respondents responses on whether they want to leave if they get another job

Do you leave this job if you get another?	Category	frequency	Percentage
	Yes	15	75%
	No	5	25%
	Total	20	100%

Source: field survey, May 2019

As indicated in the above Table 2, majority (75%) of respondents wanted to leave their current jobs if they get another job. To this contrary, 25% of respondents responded that they wanted to continue their job or not if they get another. It is possible to conclude that large number of waitresses leave their job if they get another job like high salary or other useful things for them. This means if they get better use or opportunity, they will leave their job. According to Demody, Young and Taylor (2004), hotel managers can minimize waitresses' turnover by understanding their workers motivation.

Table 3: respondent's monthly income in Ethiopian Birr

How much is your monthly income?	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	150-250	2	10%
	251-350	5	25%
	351-450	4	20%
	>450	9	45%
	Total	20	100%

Source: field survey, May 2019

As it can be seen from the above Table 3, largest number of waitresses' (45%) monthly income in this data was above 450 birr. 10% of respondents' monthly income was from 150-250. 25% of respondents' monthly income was 251-350 birr while 20% of respondents' monthly income was 351-450 birr and 45% of monthly income is above 450 birr. Most of the waitresses did not satisfy equally regarding their income satisfaction. It is possible to say that large number of waitresses in this study did not get enough salary which can sustain their life.

Table 4: Satisfaction of waitresses concerning income they earn

Do you think the income you get enough for you?	Category	frequency	Percentage
	Yes	1	5%
	No	19	95%

Source: field survey, May 2019

The above Table 4 indicated that majority (95%) of the respondents responded that they thought that the income they get did not enough for them whereas minority (5%) of them responded that the income they get was enough for them.

Table 5: Distribution of waitresses by degree of relation with the owner of cafe

Do you have a good relation with the owner of café?	Category	frequency	Percentage
	Yes	4	20%
	No	16	80%
	Total	20	100%

Source field survey, May 2019

The above Table 5 showed that majorities (80%) of respondents do not have a good relationship with the owner of the café while 20% of respondents have a good relation with

the owner of cafe. It is obvious that all people do not interact with another people equally. Some people have deep relationship with people whereas some people have no; some have good relationship with others whereas another people have no. Customers' satisfaction depends on the servers' satisfaction. Waitresses' satisfaction depends on their motivation to work in waitressing. Catherine et al. (2009) managers' loyalty on their workers is main motivational factor. The owners of the hotels should have good relationship with their waitresses.

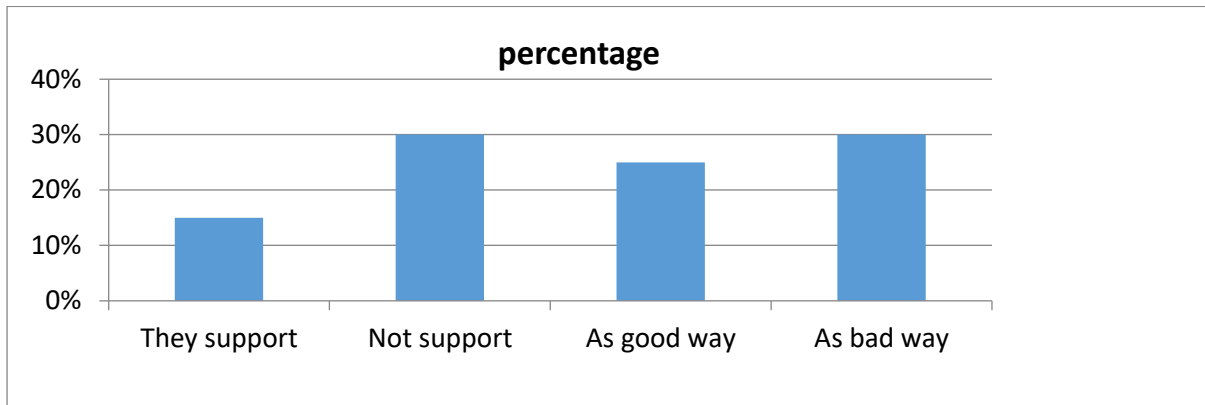


Chart 1: Society's attitude towards the waitress work

As it can be seen from the above graph, 15% of respondents answered that the society supports their occupation. Majority of them (30%) responded that society supported their jobs. Similar number of participants (30%) responded that and of respondents answered that the society see their work as under evaluated one.25% of respondents answered that society see their work as good way. From the majority sound, it can be conclude that large number of waitresses thinks that their work does not have a support from the society and the societies see their job as a lower work. The data obtained from the interview supports this finding. Accordingly, one of the respondents said that, "customers specially women customers shows us how they scorn our job and it makes me to dislike the job by their reaction and to tell you the truth it makes me to feel like I am in bollard job and I went to get away from these career ."

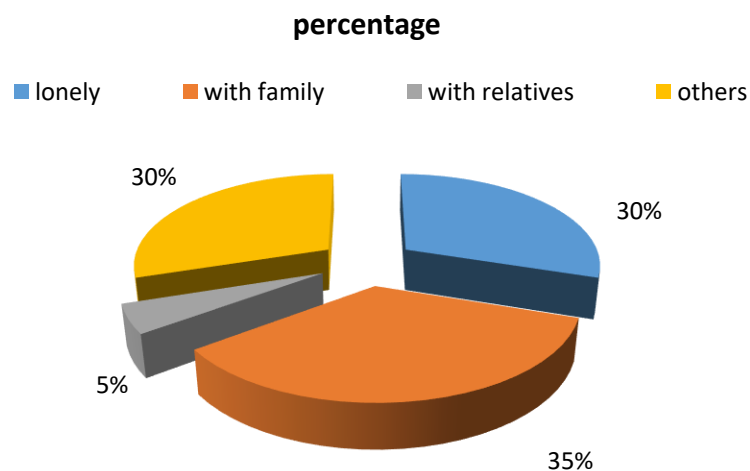


Chart 2: Distribution of respondents by living place

The above pie chart presents that majority of the respondents (35%) responded that they live with their parents; 30% of respondents live alone; 5% of respondents live with their relatives and respondents and who live with other are 30%. The finding of this study is that large numbers of waitresses in this data live with their parent. Additionally, the number of waitresses who live other place and alone has a great number. According to in-depth interview, one waitress said that: *“I live here in café, I eat here, I work here, and I sleep here. Therefore, I have no expenses. If I rent a house, the salaries that I will get not enough for me. So, I got many advantages from living in café.”*

Table 6: distribution of waitresses who get tips and not get tips

Do you get tips from your customer?	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Yes	17	85%
	No	3	15%
	Total	20	100%

Source field survey, May 2019

The above table 6 indicated that majority of the respondents 85% of respondents get tips from their customer while 15% of respondent do not get tips. However, tipping is considered as sources of income. In a similar way, Catherine, Randall, Denver (2009) found that tips are sources of income for over three million people in the USA. Lynn and Simons (2000) suggest that tips are large portion of servers' income in hotel.

Table 7: who give more tips for waitresses

Who gives you more tips?	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Male	13	65%
	Female	4	20%
	Non tipped	3	15%

Source field survey, May 2019

As the above table indicates, 65% of respondent's get more tips from male customers, 20% of respondent get tips from female and 15% of respondent are non-tipped. We can conclude that, males give more tips than females customers for waitresses. Females give tips but males see waitresses' attractiveness and they give more tips. This result is in line with Lynn and Simon's (2000) also found that waitresses earn large tips if they are attractive.

Table 8: waitresses benefit from serving in hotels

Do you get any additional benefits from this work?	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Yes	9	45%
	No	11	55%
	Total	20	100%

Source field survey, May 2019

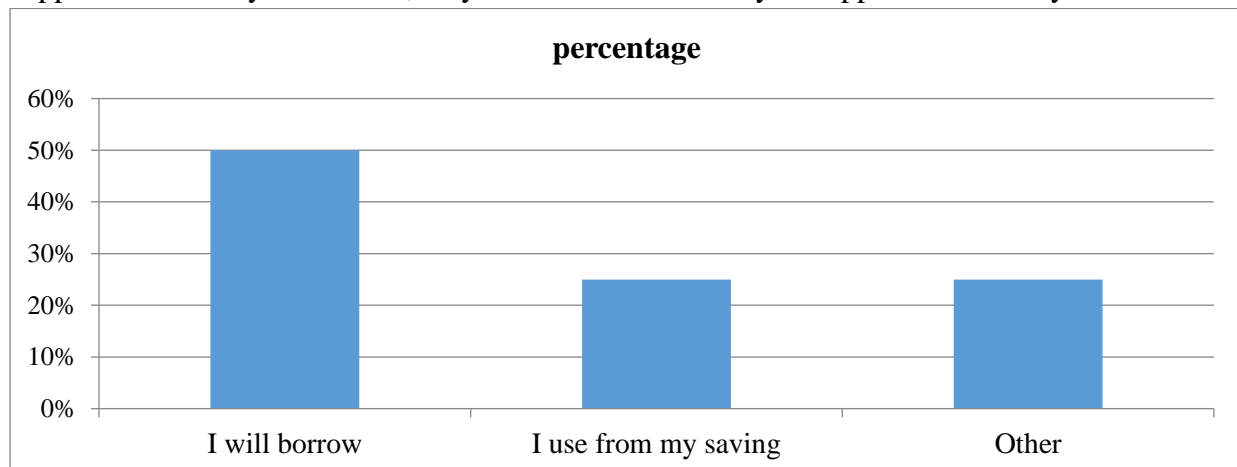
As indicated by the above tables 45% of respondents get additional benefit from this work and 55% of respondents do not get any additional benefit from this work. Hotels in Ethiopia do not pay well for waitresses. There was no salary scales for waiters or waitresses legally. Therefore, Ethiopian government should legally decide on the salary scales of waiters or waitresses.

Table 9: Respondent's attitude towards their salary

Does your salary is enough for you to support your family?	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Yes	3	15%
	No	17	85%
	Total	20	100%

Source: field survey, May 2019

Table 9 above showed that large number of respondents (85%) answered that their salary is not enough to support their family whereas 15% of them agreed that their salary is enough to support their family. Therefore, they do not have the ability to support their family.

*Graph 1: Distribution of waitress by money using system*

The above graph 1 indicated that 50% of respondents borrow money from another people if they finish their money before salary comes. Similar percentages (25%) of respondents use their money that they saved and use another method. Therefore, borrowing money is the system used mainly by waitress when they finish their money before salary.

Table 10: When waitresses broke one material

If you broke one material what would you do?	category	Frequency	Percentage
	I will pay	15	75%
	I will not pay	5	25%
	total	20	100%

Table 10 above intended to identify whether the respondents pay if they break one property while serving people in the hotel or not. Accordingly, large number of the respondents (75%) pay from their salary if they breakdown one material in the café whereas 25% of respondents answered that the owner of cafe will not ask any payment. This may demotivate the waitresses. This study indicated that small number of waitresses were cared and motivated by the owners of the hotels. This finding is in line with Enz's (2001) who found that lack of care for waiters or waitresses were one of the major problems in hotel industry.

Interview Results

The researcher has gathered data from key informant interview, particularly governmental *socio* such as labour and social affairs and also women and children affairs concerning the socio-economic challenges and opportunities of waitress in Ambo town. The information gathered from the key informants regarding the situations of waitresses indicated that there was no special plan to solve the waitresses' problems in the town. There was nothing done for them exclusively. All of the interviewees reported that like other employees, waitresses' rights are always protected by the law. The office of labour and social affairs and women and children affairs established employee and employer agency. They tried to go with their situations whether they are in a good or bad situation. Similarly, they tried to give awareness about life skills for the waitresses, like wearing their uniform properly and to know about their rights and obligations.

Regarding the objections from the waitresses, their offices usually receive objections from the waitresses. However, many of the objections come by the waitresses who do not have any work contract for both side (waitress and employer), which is difficult to give judge. They try to create condition for them to reach on consensus without any interference of third party. If the conditions go above their power, they send them to a court. Concerning other the socio-economic challenges waitress encounter, the interview showed the following problems:

- They did not have enough rest.
- They did not get time to personally contact with customer and their relatives or friends because of work load
- Their saving culture is small because of life is expensive.
- They may sexually harassed by males.
- They are vulnerable to different addictions.
- They are vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases.
- Work for long time by very low salary.

Waitressing is not easy job. It includes seating customers, providing menu for customers, taking orders, cleaning tables and floors, washing dishes, delivering foods and drinks and preparing bill for payment. It requires educated workers. However, the findings of this study showed that the waitresses did not have certificate. Besides, hotel management made them work all the days including public holidays and weekends, without any additional payment. Government and other concerned bodies should interfere and keep the waitresses' rights. Although waitresses face predicament situations regarding their job, the socio-economic opportunities they get from their job are also investigated. Some of these opportunities are discussed below.

- Sometimes, they may get education opportunities.
- They can support their family.
- If they did not have homestead, they get sleep room.
- They can get food and sleeping room.
- They can get work experiences.
- They can get a chance to know many people.
- They can have a broad opportunity to get a marriage partner.

Discussion

This study provided several challenges waitresses face in their career. These economic challenges bring big difficulty on waitresses' lives. For instance, they the societies do not give respect for this job, and larger society see the job as lower occupation. Besides, the monthly salary is not enough for their needs. The result indicated that their monthly salary is not more than 600 birr. It is difficult to live with this salary in Ethiopia in current economic inflations. Kidist (2012) also found that the salary domestic workers earn in Ethiopia is extremely low, which cannot cover their food and accommodation to be covered. This result is also inconsistent with Yohannes's (2014) study who found that domestic workers in Ethiopia are challenged by low wages and work burden, which affected their education. This can be true for women including waitresses in Ethiopia. He also identified that domestic workers in Ethiopia considered as a skill that do not requires special skills. This finding also revealed that waitresses in Ethiopia face harassment by their employers. In South Africa, female domestic workers endured the challenges since they afraid of losing their salary (Mudau1, Thobejane, Khosa & Thizwilondi, 2017). Another study also identified that women workers in domestic labour do not get what they deserved to get (Ethiopian Bureau of Labour and Social Science Affairs, 2010). In addition to this, most of the waitresses reported that community undermined their job. The community around them view waitressing as useless profession. This may led them to dissatisfaction of their jobs. Mbugua et al. (2015) respondents reported that many of them do not tell what they are doing, even their neighbours do not know that they are working in hotel and restaurant.

The do not have weekly rest day. In a similar way, they do not have awareness of legal. Mbugua (2014) in Kenya also observed that domestic workers rarely benefit from legal rights in terms and conditions of employment. In Ethiopia, Kidist (2012) found that many of women in domestic workers worked for more than 16 hours per day. This study revealed that socio-economic problems make them to work in hotels. Most of hotels in Ethiopia employ

unskilled women as waitresses. Additionally, they work to help their families. Other factors were lack of family support, lack of income and lack of other job force waitresses to engage in to this job. Mbugua (2014) also identified that most women live in desperate situation so that they are forced to employ in any work because of lack of income.

The findings of this study also indicated most of the waitresses did not get tip from their income. This study is not similar view with previous study who found that millions of waiter/waitresses in US America get great portion of their income from tipping (Azar, 2003). The finding of this study also indicted the waitresses get some opportunities in serving in the hotels. For instance, they may get opportunities for example when the prices of goods increase. This means the cafe waitresses who live in the cafe do not affected by this situation because they don't have expenses. Furthermore, it means that these waitresses live in the cafe, they eat there, they sleep there and they may get educational opportunities. Most of the waitresses reported that they experienced unfair working conditions. This study is in line previous studies. For instance, a study by Agaya and Asunza (2013) identified that women workers in domestic working experienced job insecurity as major challenges women face in Kenya.

The findings of this study indicated that the servers did not have diploma or any certificate on serving people in the hotels. Working in hotels demand the ability of mathematics, English, ability run cash register, ability to handle people and writing ability. In addition to this, their access to education is very low. This study shared similar results with Yohannes (2014) who found that domestic workers in Ethiopia are not access to learning since they are forced to burden of works.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the socio-economic challenges and opportunities of waitresses in Ambo Town. The data were collected through both questionnaires and interviews. The findings of this study indicated that waitresses face different socio-economic challenges. Therefore, it is time for government and other concerned bodies to take action to minimize waitresses socio-economic challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are forwarded to different concerned bodies to alleviate the socio-economic challenges of waitresses. Accordingly, office of labor and social affairs with the collaboration of women and children should attempt to recognize and validate the existence of the intricate challenge faced by waitresses. They need to conduct further studies concerning the socio-economic challenges faced by the waitresses. The followings are very useful recommendation we forwarded:

- Many waitresses have low educational level because they do not have enough support from their family. Therefore, the government and other concerned bodies should provide free education programme.
- Most of them worked for long hours, without extra payment. There should be policies on the rights of waitresses in Ethiopia, particularly, minimum wage policy is needed.

- Waitress themselves should try to engage in the restaurants of employers who guarantees and fulfil their needs. This should be hand in hand with the available legal contractual agreements (not oral agreement).
- Rural to urban migration must be decreased. Therefore, the government should create good conditions in the rural area.
- The whole society in general and particular group of actors like civil society, governmental organizations, stakeholders, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community based organization (CBO), private property owners, employers or any volunteer private individuals, etc need to participate and respond promptly to curb the socio-economic constraints of waitresses. The existing opportunity should be strengthened and encouraged.
- Hotels, restaurants, cafes and bars should stand for the waitresses' right.
- Waitresses should get education opportunities.

The Implication Of The Study

Descriptive study can inform the existing problems of waitresses in their careers. In this study, the researcher wants to identify waitresses' socio-economic problems in Ambo town. The waitresses' socio-economic challenges identified in this study help concerned bodies to take actions to solve waitresses' socio-economic problems.

Limitation And Study Forward

Socio-economic problems of waitresses in Ethiopia are neglected area of research. This study is even still early. Hence, future research may include other problems of waitresses. The other limitation of this study was that participants of this study were selected in Ambo town. Another researches may include large number of waitresses from different cities in Ethiopia.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The research was undertaken based on ethical procedures.

Consent for publication

It can be published.

Competing interest

The author declares that he has no competing interest.

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