ABSTRACT

Whilst much scholarly attention of this nascent field of domestic service work focuses on protecting the rights and security of foreign/migrant domestic workers, the nature of domestic service work undertaken within national borders has escaped the attention of both researchers and public policy makers. Outlining the findings from a large household survey data in Ethiopia collected from seven major urban areas covering the period from 1994 to 2004, this paper departs from the usual focus on rights-based perspective and foreign migrant domestic service workers. Instead, the paper attempts to contribute to our understanding of the profile of domestic service providers, the significant drivers of participation in the provision of domestic services and the welfare of unpaid and paid domestic service workers in Ethiopia. In doing so, the paper contributes to the development of a greater evidence base, relevant for both researchers and public policy practitioners alike.

KEYWORDS: Domestic work; decent jobs; welfare; informal economy; serving households

I. Introduction

In developing countries, most labour market research focuses on exploring the drivers of unemployment, labour productivity of wage employees in the formal sector (Girma & Kedir, 2005) and employment relations within a formal contractual arrangement. There is also a growing literature examining the incidence of child labour and migrant income (Haile & Haile, 2012). Despite its growing importance, there is limited understanding and analysis of service provided by informal workers employed in private households in developing countries including Ethiopia. This is evident from the predominance of research and policy attention given to another variant of domestic service providers who often migrate to another country on employment contracts. The migration of Ethiopian domestic workers to the Middle East is a growing phenomenon and is well documented (Fernandez, 2011; Gebremedhin, 2016). Recently, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) published a detailed report on domestic workers focusing on the protection of their rights, formalising domestic and the international dimension of domestic work (ILO, 2016). In 2011, ILO passed a bill which serves as a convention for the protection of domestic workers. Both documents emphasise the rights and the contractual arrangements that need to be in place to protect domestic workers who are working in countries other than their home country.

Scholarly attention in the nascent area domestic service work to date has predominantly focused on the vulnerabilities and precarious nature of such work (Anderson, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001[AQ2]), with attention being placed on the poor protection of employment rights given to domestic workers and on the specific gendered and racialized vulnerabilities of migrant workers (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Frantz, 2008). One particular strand of the literature indeed has focused on how the migration of women from the global south to the global north has led to a woman holding unequal and highly interdependent relationships within global care chains (Anderson, 2000; Constable, 1997; Parreñas, 2001; Raijman, Schammah-Gesser, & Kemp, 2003).

Research and policy should not be concerned only with the plight of migrant/transnational domestic workers but also those who work inside a given country (Jones, Presler-Marshall, & Tefera, 2014). In this paper, we contribute to the extant literature by investigating the characteristics and determinants of paid and unpaid domestic workers within Ethiopian private households using a longitudinal quantitative survey data collected from 1994 to 2004.[1] We also extend conventional and narrow definitions of domestic work by adopting a broader definition. There are three forms of domestic work in Ethiopia. The first and most common type is to employ live-in domestic workers who are paid monthly wages. Paid domestic workers can be employed with or without a contract. The second form of paid domestic work is for visiting domestic workers who give their services without living within a household. The third group consists of unpaid domestic workers. This last group includes members of the household such as children and relatives. Like live-in domestic workers on wage employment, unpaid family workers deserve special attention because participating in household work might compromise their opportunity for school attendance/attainment and future employment potential. The damage to their welfare depends on the intensity of domestic work they are involved in and the number of hours they work.

As alluded earlier, much of the existing research emphasis is on foreign/migrant domestic workers. In addition, there is a dearth of quantitative evidence which shed light on the temporal evolution of the domestic work segment of the Ethiopian labour market. Domestic work is growing in Ethiopia and it is mostly undertaken by women and has welfare consequences mainly due to the lack of decent working arrangements (e.g. length of hours of work, amount of wage paid, vulnerability to abuse, … etc). Besides the research gap, it addresses by exploiting a unique panel data from Ethiopia, our study contributes to public policy on welfare of domestic workers by providing household survey analysis of services provided by domestic workers. Our study covers paid and unpaid domestic workers regardless of their gender. Hence, we depart from the rights-based perspective and foreign migrant domestic worker and rather focus on understanding the drivers of participation in the provision of domestic services and the welfare of those who provide them.

Using bivariate and multivariate analysis, we provide evidence on the following key questions using a quantitative household survey; (i.) What are the characteristics of those working as domestic workers? and (ii.) What are the factors that significantly affect the probability of working in private household as maids/servants, guards? Another complex layer we examine in our analysis is to look into the issue by splitting the sample into those who are working for pay and those who work without pay. In the latter case, we focus on the age structure of those participating in it to infer whether there are potential detrimental effects on education attainment. For instance, most Ethiopian children do help their families and relatives with household chores. Even if there is nothing wrong with children helping in households, an increased intensity of household work (e.g. fetching water, collecting firewood … etc) can rob young children of their energy and vital time that could have been spent in school. Under extreme cases, domestic work affects children's schooling and welfare.

The paper is organised as follows. Section II gives a policy and contextual background about domestic work in Ethiopia. In Section III, we review the relevant literature followed by a description of the data and the methodology used in our analysis in Section IV. Section V discusses descriptive statistics on the profile and characteristics of domestic workers. Section VI presents the regression results and discussed the implications of our findings before concluding the study.

II. Domestic work in Ethiopia: context

Most domestic workers in Ethiopia are neither well-educated nor attended any schooling. They predominantly originate from rural areas of Ethiopia and work in private households in towns and other major urban centres such as the capital city – Addis Ababa. They form a growing band of 'invisible' informal workers in contrast to the 'visible' informal traders and service

providers that one in streets of African cities.

Youth unemployment in Ethiopia leads individuals to seek any type of employment such as working as street vendors and as domestic workers in private households (e.g. cooks, cleaners gardeners, drivers, security guards). Our study covers all types of domestic workers including all paid (either on full-time boarding basis or on part-time or visiting contracts) and unpaid service providers. However, domestic workers in Ethiopia typically live within the households of their employers with visiting domestic workers being a minority in the domestic service labour market. Visiting domestic workers are often those who cannot be taken as live-in workers such as those with children (e.g. single mothers). Even if the services of domestic workers do not come cheap in recent times, most households cover the expenses associated with employing domestic workers.

Most domestic workers in Ethiopia are young women but there are men who are employed as guards, gardeners and drivers. Domestic workers are employed either through employment agencies and informal contacts. However, the proportion of domestic workers employed through employment agencies is very small. When recruitment takes place through agencies, the employment arrangement does not fall under what can be described as formal. This is due to the fact that most of the employment agencies are run by self-employed brokers who are the intermediaries between the employing households and the workers. The employment takes place without any paper work or written contractual arrangements. The process is based on a verbal agreement between the employer and the broker who gets paid by the employer for securing the service of the domestic worker.

1. Circumstances of domestic workers: the good and the bad

Domestic workers get poor wages in general, but this is changing over the last decade. Due to lack of written contractual arrangement, paid domestic workers are vulnerable to exploitation and possibly to inhumane treatment in extreme cases. But for some in domestic service provision, the beneficial aspect of the work is worth mentioning. For instance, some domestic workers employed in rich households (e.g. expatriates, high level government officials and businessmen) are paid a salary which is not very different from what graduates of university get in the public sector. This is one of the dramatic developments in the domestic work scene over the last 10 years. As live-in workers, all their bills are covered by the employing household. They do not incur any expenses for meals, medical care and accommodation. All these are covered by the employing households in addition to getting a monthly salary. If they are treated well without excessive work burden and are paid on top of what they get for free by way of food and accommodation, they certainly benefit from providing their services to households instead of being unemployed and live in poverty. In some households, they are given the chance to go to school to attend evening classes. In rare occasions, anecdotal evidence indicates that there are university graduates who initially started out as domestic workers. In addition, some managed to establish their own business and became self-employed. However, educational and other benefits of domestic work are becoming rare for various reasons;

i. Domestic workers are highly mobile and there is a high level of employment turnover in households. They use households as a staging post to make rapid employment transitions to other better paying households. Moving across households should not stop them to continue going to evening schools. However, their prospect of continuing their education (if any) is guaranteed only if the new employing household is willing to send them to school. Changing employing households will lead to challenges of locating a new school. Since there is no contractual obligation to send them to school, their might quit their education. Their decision to move for a better pay is not wrong but compromises their long-term welfare which can potentially be guaranteed only if they stay to finish their schooling.
ii. Domestic workers might meet traffickers as they interact and integrate with others during their school days and at other times (e.g. during off days to visit friends and family). Most are easily lured by the next 'big opportunity' in life. Their interactions with friends and/or traffickers lead them to contemplate greener pastures. Some often opt to explore their chances not only beyond their employing household but beyond the boundaries of their country of birth. The temptations of migrating abroad and earn in foreign currency lead them to leaving their employment. This certainly impedes their schooling and exposes them to exploitation in the hands of traffickers. Most often, they go to the Middle east and their plight is well documented. There is no regulation of the migration of domestic workers out of Ethiopia. Bogus 'employment' agencies and network of traffickers are the only beneficiaries from this regulatory failure by the state as well as international organisations (De Regt, 2006; Fernandez, 2013).
iii. As the salary demands of domestic workers are increasing in recent years, employing households demand more household work and commitment than usual. This often displaces school attendance. Not all households are keen to provide their gesture towards their employees when it comes to schooling.
iv. Domestic workers are often young women and face risk of early sexual initiation, early pregnancy and extreme violence in the hand of employers (Erulkar & Ferede, 2009). They are sometimes at the centre of marital tensions. At the discovery of affairs which often takes place between male family members of employer households or husbands and female domestic workers, domestic workers lose their employment or risk different forms of abuse. It is common to hear stories about male security guards starting an affair with female domestic workers when both work for the same household. In the worst of circumstances, they might give birth due to the affairs they enter into either willingly or against their wish. As a result, female domestic workers become single mothers. Consequently, they find it difficult to get employment in another household. Surely, they have a very slim prospect of getting back to school. As a coping mechanism, individuals who find themselves in such a difficult situation try to eke out a living by working as visiting domestic workers because households are reluctant to take employees with children as live-in domestic workers and give them a chance for schooling.

2. Complex layer of legal, social and employment issues

Since 2011, there is a mandatory social insurance scheme (e.g. pension entitlements) for private sector employees in the formal sector (Shiferaw, Bedi, Soderbom, & Alemu, 2017). But there is no minimum wage or any other payment provision for private sector employees such as domestic workers in the informal sector (i.e. in private households). There is a clear segmentation of the private sector employment between the formal and informal sector. Hence, there is no mechanism in place to regulate the informal labour market specifically focusing on the protection of the rights and freedom of domestic workers. They can be dismissed at any time nor can they ask for a pay rise. They can be denied getting a day off to visit family and friends. A weak legal framework that fails to regulate the domestic work service market coupled with poor employment relations arrangements makes domestic workers vulnerable to abusive and exploitative employers. However, despite the harsh legal and employment situations, some domestic workers have a rewarding relationship with their employers and this is often true of those who stay with the employing household for a long period of time.

Due to their vulnerable position and the general cultural and social norms prevailing in Ethiopia (e.g. promotion of early marriage in some cultures and ethnic groups), discrimination against women in the work place is very common. As mentioned earlier, female domestic workers within and outside Ethiopia are abused by their employers, family members of employers and

other employees of the household (e.g. guards) (Jureidini, 2010). To flee their rural communities to avoid early marriage but to be met by abusive employers in their place of employment in the urban areas is the double tragedy endured by some.

Overall, there are complex layers issues faced domestic workers in the context of developing countries such as Ethiopia. There are legal issues (e.g. absence of any contractual employment agreement), complications associated with labour relations (e.g. employee rights, limites on hours of work per day, … etc), gender discrimination, exploitation, compromised individual safety, impaired and precarious long-term future welfare. Hence, there is an urgent research and policy attention to understand the profile of domestic workers who are providing essential services to millions of households in Ethiopia.

III. Literature

1. Domestic work

We start with a brief exploration of the definition of domestic workers. Domestic workers perform a diverse set of activities such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, fetching water, looking after children and the elderly, guarding the house, driving children to and from school and gardening, among others. Regardless of the tasks performed, all domestic workers in a private household. ILO (2013) defines domestic work as 'any type of work performed in or for a household, and a domestic worker is any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship'. This is a narrow definition and leads to an underestimation of the actual number of domestic workers because it disregards unpaid family workers. Hence, domestic work in our case is defined broadly and includes;

i. Those who are engaged in providing services to private households in an employment relationship (i.e. waged employment); and
ii. Those who live in the private household and provide services without an employment relationship (e.g. services provided by relatives and children without payment).

After reviewing existing theories, we find it inappropriate to have a single conceptual and theoretical framework given the broader definition of domestic work we adopted. Most theories of domestic work are developed with transnational migration in mind. However, the domestic workers in this study are all Ethiopia and come from local communities (e.g. rural Ethiopia) within a given geographical area. Hence, theory of transnational migration is not appropriate for analysing the phenomenon of domestic work in Ethiopia. There are other theories such as feminist legal theory and employment relations theories focusing on the protection of rights of domestic workers. Our paper covers unwaged family workers. Emotive issues such as the services provided by children make the conceptual framework less amenable for theorising. For instance, if it is only on waged employees, one might be tempted to draw on theories of class (e.g. a certain group of society serving the middle class). In Ethiopia, private households from all classes use diverse set of domestic workers.

Several studies have focused on the role of the state as an actor facilitating the precarious nature of migrant domestic workers (i.e. those moving from rural to urban areas within national borders and those who migrate abroad). Research has focused on how the Philippines has developed policies as a sending state and also how countries across Europe and North America engage in migration policies which encourage the receiving of migrant domestic workers (Anderson, 2010; Lutz, 2008). Within the Middle Eastern region, studies on migrant domestic workers including those from Ethiopia have tended to focus on the exploitative relationships between the domestic work and the employer (Fernandez, 2011; Frantz, 2008; Moukarbel, 2009). Other studies have highlighted how states, such as the Gulf states, use 'sponsorship' programmes, or the 'Kafala' system in Lebanon to encourage the migration of domestic workers (Gardner, 2011; Lan, 2007). Importantly, such migrant workers are only allowed to work in 'unskilled work' on temporary contracts and are actively discouraged from seeking naturalisation (Lan, 2007). Within this literature, there has been some focus on the migration of workers from Africa, and, in particular, from Ethiopia to work in the Middle East (Fernandez, 2013), for example in UAE (Mahdavi, 2013[AQ3]) and in Qatar (Pessoa, Harkness, & Gardner, 2014). Research has focused on the unequal power relations and labour exploitation particularly of women as domestic workers. In the UK, studies have highlighted how migrant domestic workers, living under intolerable environments of control and coercion often experience different forms of physical, psychological and sexual abuse and disregard to any universal forms of employment rights (Anderson, 2007[AQ4]; Gordolan & Lalani, 2009; Lalani, 2011). Similarly, in a study of domestic workers in Sweden, Calleman (2011) note how the situation of workers employed in 'home-services' which includes cleaning, gardening and care work, can be equally or even more precarious than it is for migrant workers, working in construction or the restaurant sector.

Whilst for workers employed as domestic workers in private households, there are no collective agreements, the consequence of which means that these workers are liable to be exploited according to wage levels and have also no right to industrial action or automatic access to unemployment benefits (Calleman, 2011). They do not benefit from any social insurance schemes (e.g. pensions since 2011 in Ethiopia) (Shiferaw et al., 2017). Allied to the exploitation of women within the domestic service work sphere, research has also highlighted the exploitation of children as domestic workers (Blagbrough, 2008; Jacquemin, 2004, 2006), defined as 'children under the age of 18 who work in other people's households doing domestic chores, caring for children, and running errands' (UNICEF, 1999). Adults who are not their parents often employ such children, children normally live in the employer's home and they are either paid in cash or in kind (Kifle, 2002). Of major concern, a study in 2004 by the ILO revealed that engagement in domestic work represents the most common occupation for teenage girls in the developing world (ILO-IPEC, 2004). Ethiopia is not the exception here where the incidence of child labour is uncommon. Another group of children or youth that deserve attention are those who live with their parents and provide unpaid services to their family. This is often at the expense of attending school and compromising the quality and quantity of time they can devote to schooling (Tafere & Pankhurst, 2015).

2. Cross-national comparison of domestic work in Africa

In this sub-section, we will look into the common characteristics of domestic work in Africa and reasons behind the underestimation of the number of domestic workers. In many African countries domestic work is female-led, attracts poor pay, has a child labour component and its growth is mainly driven by rising population pressures that trigger rural–urban migration. According to ILO about three quarters of domestic workers in South Africa are women. Ethiopia has one of the highest percentage of women among domestic workers with 91%. Our household survey data shows a lower percentage of women as domestic workers but still a large proportion of them are female. The figures from the household survey analysed here indicate that 74% and 77.5% of domestic workers as women for years 1994 and 2004, respectively. With regard to pay, domestic workers receive 23.9% of average wages in Tanzania while the comparable figure is 14% in Botswana for the year 2006. In South Africa, after controlling for age, sex and educational attainment, domestic workers are paid 15% less than other workers (ILO, 2013). In terms of hours, domestic workers in Africa work much longer than former wage employees within a given week.

For instance, in Namibia and Tanzania, they work for 62 and 63 hours per week, respectively.

The data on domestic workers is patchy which makes cross-national comparison of this important and neglected segment of the labour market in Africa difficult. It is beneficial to have a harmonised database on pay, hours worked and the number of domestic workers by country. Concerning the number of domestic workers, official statistics from Africa gives an underestimate of the phenomenon. Different data sets provide different component of information concerning domestic work. Labour force surveys rarely capture both paid and unpaid domestic workers. Household surveys provide information on both components but do not report the wage and hours worked. Many households have unpaid domestic workers. There are also many households that use part-time domestic workers (i.e. those who are employed on visiting basis). On the other extreme, there are households that employ more than one domestic worker (e.g. a cook, a cleaner, a garner, a driver and a security guide) and this is often the case for rich households. It is rarely that such categories of domestic workers are included even in household surveys. There is a high turnover of domestic workers in private households and this exacerbates the volatile nature of the reported size of domestic work sector. The underestimation of the actual number of domestic workers (paid and unpaid) while filling in the demographic roster in surveys will remain to be an outstanding challenge. In future, this can be circumvented by having a dedicated section within the survey instrument for domestic work while collecting either a household or a labour force survey.

IV. Data and methodology

1. Data

The Ethiopian Urban Household Survey (EUHS) provides information on the employment status of individuals in addition to socio-economic information of households in major cities. Our analysis is based on data collected longitudinally from 1994 to 2004 which is socio-economic survey of urban households in Ethiopia (EUHS, 1994[AQ5]). The survey questionnaire includes modules on household demographics including education, rural–urban migration, employment status, income, consumption, ownership of durables, housing, health, welfare and welfare change indicators. A sample of 1500 households was selected from seven major urban centres of the country (Addis Ababa, Awassa, Dessie, Bahar Dar, Mekele, Dire Dawa and Jimma). The total sample size was distributed over the selected urban centres proportional to their populations, based on the Central Statistical Authority's population figure projections. Accordingly, the sample included 900 households from Addis Ababa, 125 from Dire Dawa, 75 from Awassa and 100 from each of the other four towns. The survey covered a total of about 12,000 individuals (Kedir & Girma, 2005).

In this section, we summarise information on paid and unpaid domestic service providers. We provide data on the number and percentage of domestic workers for the period covering the years 1994–2004. The percent of domestic workers is out of the total labour force of those who reported their main economic activity. Who is a domestic worker in Ethiopia? According to the survey, one is identified as a domestic worker if she/he declares herself/himself, as paid full-time/part-time/visiting domestic worker and unpaid domestic worker (i.e. family members helping with household chores). Our data which includes information both on paid and unpaid domestic work leads to a better and comprehensive/broader understanding of domestic work in the informal labour market of a developing economy.

It is worth noting how the information on the main activity of individuals is recorded in the survey across time. The identification of main activity of individual in 1994 is straightforward. However, for other rounds information is collected by tracing movements of residents in the household between any two given survey dates. For instance, for round 2 (i.e. year 1995), the survey asks changes in the form of 'new comers'; 'main activity of new comer'; 'reason for moving out/ entry' … etc. These variables are very relevant to identify the exact number of domestic workers in a given round of the household survey. For instance, under the table of 'reason for moving out of the household', those who replied, 'contract ended' are most likely domestic workers who used to be in the sample in 1994 (round 1) but who were no longer employed by the household in 1995 (i.e. round 2). In round 2, more women than men were registered as new comers and we assume that most of them might be domestic workers. The data on the variable 'reason for entry' gives an alternative count of the number of domestic workers in addition to the variable 'main activity of new comer'. The former seems to give an upper bound. The latter gives a lower bound figure representing the number of domestic workers because it does not include unpaid domestic workers. This indirect way of arriving at the number of domestic workers applies for rounds 2 and 3 (1997) while for rounds 4 (2000) and 5 (2004), we identify the numbers directly as we did for round 1 due to a straightforward response of the numbers in the surveys. Hence, we use the following illustrative formulation to arrive at the domestic workers (paid and unpaid) in rounds 2 and 3.

> Total Domestic Workers in 1995 (1997) = Domestic Workers in 1994 (1995) – paid domestic workers who left the household since 1994– unpaid domestic workers who left the household since last interview (1994) + New entrants to the household as paid domestic workers + unpaid family workers & children helping with domestic and other family work.

The total number of domestic workers in 1994 (round 1) was 547. For instance, in Round 2, paid domestic workers who left the household due to their contract ending were 40, new entrants as paid domestic workers, unpaid family workers and children helping with household chores were 132, 25 and 24, respectively. Hence, the number of paid domestic workers for round 2 is computed as 547 + 132–40 = 684. The same procedure is followed to arrive at the number of domestic workers for 1997 (round 3) relative to 1995 (round 2).

2. Methodology

Since the incidence of domestic work is a discrete/binary outcome, we specify a multivariate probit regression model that predicts the probability of participation in domestic work. The likelihood of being a domestic worker (y) depends on several individual and characteristics (x). Individuals can participate in paid domestic work, unpaid domestic work and total domestic work (which combines paid and unpaid domestic work). We used the probit model which is an appropriate discrete outcome model since we have domestic work status variable that can only defined in a binary fashion. The outcome variable takes a value of 1 if the respondent is a domestic worker and 0 otherwise. We can specify separate probit models for those in paid employment, those who work unpaid and those who are domestic workers regardless of the employment arrangement. This gives us a possibility of specifying three different probit models for each of the domestic work types. Hence, we estimated three probit models which help us to identify the variables significantly associated with the likelihood/probability of being in each domestic work categories in urban Ethiopia.

The probit model is based on an underlying latent (unobserved) variable model which is conventionally represented as follows:

Equation (1) is often called the index function. The latent variable (y^*) can be defined as a difference between the intrinsic value/utility generated for working as a domestic worker and the utility of not being a domestic worker. We assume that the individual has propensity of either being a domestic worker or a non-domestic worker as represented by y^*. The estimating probit equation which follows the standard normal distribution can be specified as follows;

where the likelihood of being a domestic worker depends on a range of right hand side explanatory variables (x). The vector x represents all the relevant explanatory variables such as age, gender, marital status, ethnic origin and education levels of the individuals. The final term ε represents the error term of the equation which is normally distribution with zero mean and constant variance.

V. Profile of domestic workers

In this section, we present some of the main characteristics of domestic workers. Looking at total domestic work status in Table 1 (which is the sum of paid and unpaid domestic work), we see an upward trend in the number of domestic workers until 1997 with a slight decline in 2000 following by an increase in 2004. The numbers reported in percentages in the parentheses are proportions of those in the labour force. Even if the *percentage* decline in domestic work is mirrored by the decline in the *number* of domestic workers for the period between 1997 and 2000, there was an increase in the actual number of domestic workers between 2000 and 2004. In general, domestic workers are growing groups of labour force in Ethiopia. Particularly paid domestic work showed a consistent increase over the years both in terms of percentages and number of domestic workers except for a slight dip in numbers between 1997 and 2000. This is also true of unpaid family work for some years (i.e. until 1997). But in the later years, the number of children helping with household chores declined dramatically. This is an encouraging trend. It is perceived that children learn vital skills when they participate in domestic work. However, to benefit from the participation in household chores, the intensity of children's involvement and that of young relatives of school age should be minimal without adversely affecting their school attendance. If they spend a disproportionate number of hours per day, the detrimental effect on their school attendance and attainment will have long-term damaging consequences. For instance, using data from the Welfare Monitoring Survey of 2011, Kedir (2014) shows school absenteeism is positively and significantly associated with children's participation in household chores (Kifle, 2002). Hence, the declining trend in the number of children that can be classified as unpaid family workers enhances the probability of going to school for Ethiopian children.

Table 1. Number (%) of individuals by domestic work status, 1994–2004.

Domestic work (DW) status	1994	1995	1997	2000	2004
Total DW	547 (5.9)	684 (7.4)	934 (10.1)	787 (9.2)	858 (8.8)
Paid DW	272 (3.0)	437 (4.7)	571 (6.1)	548 (6.4)	637 (6.3)
Unpaid family worker	187 (2.0)	212 (2.3)	235 (2.6)	182(2.1)	189 (2.1)
Children helping with household chores	88 (1.0)	112 (1.3)	128 (1.5)	57 (0.7)	32 (0.4)

Using data of 1994 (first round) and 2004 (last round) or a 10-year window of analysis, Tables 2–6 give the profile of domestic workers using key personal characteristics such as gender, age, school attendance, school attainment, ethnic origin and marital status. According to Table 2, for all categories of domestic workers (i.e. paid and unpaid), a large percentage and number of them are females. This is consistent with findings in other developing countries. A non-negligible number and percentage of the workers are at least 30 years old (i.e. about one-fifth of the total) but most of them are younger and belong to the age range 10– 29. To highlight the problem of child labour (paid or unpaid), one can see the number and proportion of domestic workers in the age range 10– 15. Note that most children work as unpaid domestic workers, but one cannot rule out children working for wage (Admassie, 2002).

Table 2. Number and percentage of domestic work status by age and gender.

Domestic work status	Male	Female	Age 10–15	Age 16–29	Age 30+
1994					
Total DW	142 (26)	405 (74)	93 (17.9)	319 (61.4)	108 (20.8)
Paid DW	41 (15.1)	231 (84.9)	37 (13.6)	181 (66.5)	54 (19.9)
Unpaid DW	101 (36.7)	174 (63.3)	56 (22.6)	138 (55.7)	54 (21.8)
2004					
Total DW	118 (22.5)	407 (77.5)	43 (8.3)	335 (64.8)	139 (26.9)
Paid DW	49 (16.1)	255 (83.9)	25 (8.2)	209 (69)	69 (22.8)
Unpaid DW	69 (31.2)	152 (68.8)	18 (8.4)	126 (58.9)	70 (32.7)

Table 3. Domestic work status by school attendance, 1994.

Domestic work status	Attending school	Has attended in the past	Never attended
Total DW	73 (13.5)	270 (50.1)	196 (36.4)
Paid DW	43 (15.9)	112 (41.3)	116 (42.8)
Unpaid DW	30 (11.2)	158 (59.0)	80 (29.8)

Table 4. Domestic work status by schooling cycle completed, 1994.

Domestic work status	No schooling	Primary schooling	Secondary incomplete	Secondary	Tertiary
Total DW	152 (30.6)	195 (39.2)	64 (12.9)	68 (13.4)	18 (3.6)
Paid DW	88 (35.9)	107 (43.7)	29 (11.8)	17 (6.9)	4 (1.6)
Unpaid DW	64 (25.4)	88 (34.9)	35 (13.9)	51 (20.2)	14 (5.6)

Table 5. Number of and percentage of domestic workers by ethnic origin.

Domestic work status	Amhara	Oromo	Tigre	Gurage	Other
1994					
Total DW	265 (48.5)	95 (17.4)	26 (4.8)	86 (15.7)	75 (13.7)
Paid DW	150 (55.2)	49 (18.0)	12 (4.4)	33 (12.1)	28 (10.3)
Unpaid Dw	115 (41.8)	46 (16.7)	14 (5.1)	53 (19.3)	47 (17.1)
2004					
Total DW	275 (52.8)	110 (21.1)	33 (6.3)	72 (13.8)	31 (6.0)
Paid DW	178 (59.3)	61 (20.3)	19 (6.3)	23 (7.7)	19 (6.3)
Unpaid DW	97 (43.9)	49 (22.2)	14 (6.3)	49 (22.2)	12 (5.4)

Table 6. Number and percentage of domestic worker by marital status.

Domestic work status	Not married	Married	Divorced/separated/widowed
1994			
Total DW	435 (79.5)	18.3 (3.3)	94 (17.2)
Paid DW	204 (75.0)	11 (4.0)	57 (21)
Unpaid DW	231 (84.0)	7 (2.6)	37 (13.5)
2004			
Total DW	440 (77.2)	60 (11.6)	58 (11.2)
Paid DW	237 (78.2)	32 (10.6)	34 (11.2)
Unpaid DW	163 (75.8)	28 (13.0)	24 (12.2)

The gender and age pattern of domestic workers observed for 1994 is replicated in the in 2004. But as seen in Table 2, there are fewer number and percentage of young children (i.e. in the age range 10–15) in paid and unpaid domestic work in 2004. Relative to 1994, there are a large number and percentage of individuals aged 30 and above in 2004.

In our data, we have the schooling reported for 539 out of the 547 domestic workers for 1994. Young women in Ethiopia provide services in households to escape the challenging rural life and the pressures of early marriage. As Tables 3 and 4

show some domestic workers are still attending school and some have already completed some level of education such as secondary schooling. In few of the cases, some domestic workers have tertiary education. This is surprising. Anecdotal evidence shows that some university graduate work as security guards and drivers for rich households and expatriates working in international organisations. In addition, the returns to schooling are believed to be declining over time with quality shading of education being a growing concern nationally at all levels in recent years. We suspect the data in relation to tertiary education and domestic work picks such phenomenon (Molla & Gale, 2015; Yirdaw, 2016). However, mostly who are observed to be working in the household with tertiary education are often the children of the household and are unpaid (see Table 4). There are domestic workers who to go evening schools and this is shown in the first column of Table 3 which gives the number and percentage of individuals still attending school. Overall, most paid domestic workers have achieved a very low level of schooling and about 80% of them have either primary or no schooling.

Based on national population, the Oromo ethnic group constitutes the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia followed the Amhara, Gurage and Tigre ethnic groups. This national demographic proportion is not reflected in the distribution of the domestic workers across the four ethnic groups as shown in Table 5. Most domestic workers are from the Amhara ethnic group followed by the Oromo, Gurage and Tigre. This can be explained by the fact that early marriage incidence is the worst in the Amhara region and hence there are many migrants from rural Amhara regions to bigger cities of Ethiopia (Kedir, 2014). In addition, in major cities, Amharic (official language of Ethiopia) is the major means of communication and all Amharas are speakers of the language which makes it easier for them to move to various cities for paid domestic work. The Gurages are from provinces with the most dense population. Hence, land scarcity is a push factor for them to migrate to cities and most work as self-employed or domestic workers in large cities. The pattern of distribution of domestic workers by ethnic group has been similar both for 1994 and 2004.

Most domestic workers are not married (about 80%) with only 3% of them being married. However, it is evident that marital misfortune can lead some to work for private households. Among those who are divorced, separated or widowed most of them work in paid domestic work relative to unpaid domestic work (see Table 6). The number and percentage of domestic workers who are not married stayed the same between the two survey dates. However, the numbers and percentages of domestic workers who are married are markedly higher in 2004 than in 1994. This is a worrying trend from a welfare perspective. Between the two dates, it seems that domestic work is used as a coping mechanism for those even in a marital union. There is a clear shift in 1994 and 1994 in the composition of domestic workers. For instance, the number and percentage of domestic workers who are divorced, separated or widowed is lower in 2004 than in 1994.

VI. Regressions results and discussion

As reported in Table 7, the probit model coefficient estimates corroborate our descriptive findings. Unsurprisingly, females are more likely to be in domestic work than males as shown by the positive and statistically significant coefficients of the three probit models shown in columns 2–4. Taking the young age grouping for our sampled individuals (i.e. age group 10–15) as a reference category, the probability of participating in domestic work increases with age. Most domestic workers are in the 16–29 age group. In all models, the coefficient of this age group is the largest suggesting its importance in increasing the propensity of working as a domestic worker. Hence it is mainly a job undertaken by young at the crucial stage of their life such as attending school and/or completing schooling. For Ethiopian youth locked in domestic work, completing schooling and making a successful transition to better employment either in the formal and the informal sector is a huge challenge. With increasing migration from rural to urban centres and the increasing youth unemployment situation in the country, there is a tendency for more and more young people to be in domestic informal work.

Table 7. Probit Regression predicting the probability of engaging in domestic work.

Variable	Total DW	Paid DW	Unpaid DW
Female	0.34*** (0.06)	0.53***(0.08)	0.14**(0.07)
Age 16–29	0.87*** (0.07)	1.03*** (0.09)	0.45*** (0.08)
Age 30+	0.46***	0.36***(0.14)	0.37***(0.13)
Education (RC: no schooling)			
Primary	−0.62*** (0.08)	−0.54***(0.09)	−0.45***(0.10)
Junior secondary	−1.04*** (0.10)	−1.12***(0.12)	−0.60***(0.12)
Secondary	−1.55***(0.09)	−1.82***(0.13)	−0.86***(0.11)
Tertiary	−1.32***(0.13)	−1.63***(0.21)	−0.70***(0.15)
Ethnic group (RC: Amhara)			
Oromo	−0.03(0.07)	−0.06(0.09)	0.03 (0.09)
Tigre	−0.38***(0.11)	−0.51***(0.15)	−0.16(0.13)
Gurage	0.17**(0.08)	−0.07 (0.11)	0.30***(0.09)
Other ethnic group	0.27***(0.08)	0.09 (0.11)	0.35***(0.10)
Marital status (RC: single)			
Married	−1.32***(0.13)	−1.06***(0.15)	−1.19***(0.16)
Separated/divorced/widowed	−0.39*** (0.10)	−0.24* (0.13)	−0.36***(0.13)
LR chi-square statistic (*p*-value)	667.6 (.00)	532.2 (.00)	199.95 (.00)
Pseudo R^2	0.19	0.25	0.10
N	7319	7319	7319

The negative and significant coefficients of all schooling variables suggest the beneficial effect of education. The results show that relative to those without any level of schooling, those who completed any level of schooling are less likely to be domestic workers. To see the magnitude of the effects of variables beyond coefficient estimates, we also examined the marginal effects.[2] The results based on marginal effects show the importance of education in reducing the probability of being a domestic worker. The magnitude of the negative coefficients increases with increases in levels of education making the prospect of working as a domestic worker decreasing as education increases.

It is difficult to interpret coefficients associated with ethnicity. It is not clearly understood why some ethnic groups are less or more likely to engage in domestic work. According to our estimates, relative to Amharas individuals from the Gurage ethnic group show a higher propensity of being employed as domestic workers while those from the Tigre ethnic group are less likely to be domestic workers. Note that the coefficient is not significant for paid domestic work but positive in the other two cases suggesting that the overall result in column 2 is driven by the results associated with unpaid domestic work coefficient estimates (i.e. column 4). Earlier the bivariate analysis on the link between marital status and domestic work revealed that most of the domestic workers are single. This is consistent with the regression results reported below when we take singles as a reference group.

VII. Conclusion

This paper looked at neglected aspect of informal employment in service provision – domestic work. The informal entrepreneurship literature mainly focuses on 'visible' participants in informal sector activities that encompass sales and production without registration (e.g. street vendors). In addition, existing study on domestic services are extensive on transnational or migrant domestic workers. Our research contributes to a variety of strands of interdisciplinary literature on informal employment by making domestic workers 'visible' within a given national border through an analysis of quantitative household survey data. We extended the definition of domestic work by including unpaid domestic work by adopting a broader definitional of domestic work (paid and unpaid) unlike the conventional definition of domestic work by ILO that recognises only waged domestic work. Our study has important policy implications and relevance to growing recent literature on decent work and women economic empowerment. Growing youth unemployment particularly of young women leads them to seek any type of employment such as working as street vendors and domestic workers. Understanding and protecting the rights and welfare of domestic workers in Ethiopia requires an understanding of the complex layers of legal, socio-cultural, economic and employment relations issues.

We highlighted some of the complex issues surrounding domestic work in Ethiopia to lay the foundation for future research and policy attention to improve the working conditions and welfare of domestic workers. Despite showing interest to protect the welfare of domestic workers, both government and international organisations (e.g. ILO) have so far failed to enforce the regulation of the domestic service provision informal sector. Labour market and other researchers ignored the study of domestic workers that do not meet the criteria a migrant domestic worker. More can be done to improve our understanding of an important informal sector service providers in developing countries. Further research and data collection effort are required to make domestic workers within a given national border more 'visible' and their rights and privileges protected. This improves public policy and the conduct of employment and welfare studies in the future across diverse set of social science disciplines such as economics, economic geography, management and gender studies.

Notes

1. We are focusing on data sets from 1994 to 2004 because there are no recently collected comparable longitudinal data on domestic work from household surveys.
2. The results based on marginal effects can be provided upon request.

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