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Women in Paid Work: A Continuum of Choices and Constraints

A case study of women's agency and well-being upon participating in paid work in
the Ethiopian garment industry



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Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of paid work in the Ethiopian export-oriented garment industry on women's empowerment, as perceived by the women themselves. The study first explores the reasons for why and how women pursue paid work in the industry. It further examines the ways in which paid work might affect women's intra-household decision-making. By focusing on the experiences among various women of different social positions, the study also examines its effects on women's agency and well-being.

The analysis is based on the use of a qualitative case study, which includes individual interviews, focus group discussions, and pile-sorting activities undertaken with women working in an export-oriented garment factory in Bole Lemi Industrial Park, Addis Ababa. The findings reveal that experiences of working in the garment industry differ depending on women's social position or background. Despite often being driven by economic necessity, paid work in the export-oriented garment industry can induce a sense of freedom and independence for some women. However, it is associated with hardship, negative agency and time poverty for women who are married or have children to support. It appears that heavily engrained gendered institutions play a role in shaping women's experiences.

Key words: Women, Paid work, Garment industry, Decision-making, Agency, Well-being, Ethiopia.

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Abbreviations

BLIP	Bole Lemi Industrial Park
CETU	Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions
EDRI	Ethiopian Development Research Institute
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
GTP II	Second Growth and Transformation Plan
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KI	Key Informant
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
Shints	Shin Textile Solutions Co., Ltd.
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Problem

With roots in the *Women in Development* paradigm that arose among policymakers in the early 1970s, there was increased attention to the role of women as productive contributors to the economy (Razavi & Miller 1995). More women entered the labour market under globalisation, and the World Bank (2011) coined the corresponding benefits as ‘smart economics’. Essentially, gender equality is partly understood as expanding women’s access to paid work, which has positive effects on not only economic growth and productivity, but also women’s empowerment¹, as well as individual and household well-being.

Globalisation refers to the drastic increase in socio-economic interdependence between countries, and it has been characterised by increased interest in promoting export-oriented industries as a means to development (Ruwanpura 2011). The low-cost and competitive garment industry² is no exception. Alongside businesses outsourcing their production processes to low-income countries, empirical studies have found that women from poorer socio-economic backgrounds often end up working in this export-oriented industry for long hours and low pay (Elson & Pearson 1981; Domínguez et al. 2010; Standing 1999). Simultaneously they are expected to bear responsibilities of balancing work and domestic care duties with minimal or no outside support (Benería et al. 2016). Nevertheless, these considerations are widely absent in conventional discourses that tend to view the effects of paid work on women as uniform and invariably optimistic (Chant and Sweetman 2012). Feminist scholars have pointed to the effects of paid work on women’s experiences of agency and well-being as “marked by ambiguity, tensions and contradictions” (Benería et al. 2016:124). They highlight that context-specific factors, such as gender norms, and the intersection of age, marital status and more must also be taken into account (Blin 2008; Kabeer 2012).

In Ethiopia’s second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II), the labour-intensive, export-oriented garment industry is identified as one of the priority sectors with the potential to drive Ethiopia toward becoming a lower-middle-income country by 2025 (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2016). The active integration of women in the country’s development process is a cross-

¹ In this study, empowerment is defined as a process of change, whereby a person has the agency to make choices, set goals and “act upon them” (Kabeer 1999a:438). It will be addressed in further detail later on.

² The garment industry and the export-oriented garment industry are used interchangeably in this study.

cutting objective, and development appears to be valued very much in terms of quantitative measures associated with economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction. Even if women – many of whom have entered the labour market for the first time – make up the majority of employees on the factory floor, there is no recognition in GTP II of the potentially adverse consequences for women upon accessing work in the garment industry (UNDP 2017). Studies in the Ethiopian context (World Bank 2015; Dalberg 2017) have so far focused on analysing the relatively new industry from a business case. However, there are no studies that take a feminist approach to research, nor any that have done an in-depth case study on women’s participation in paid work in the garment industry and how it affects decision-making, agency, and well-being beyond the work place to their homes.

1.2. Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

By focusing on the individual experiences and opinions among various women working in a factory in Bole Lemi Industrial Park (BLIP), located in the outskirts of Ethiopia’s capital city Addis Ababa, this study aims to explore the impact of paid work in the Ethiopian export-oriented garment industry on women’s empowerment, as perceived by the women themselves. My intention is to contribute to a nuanced understanding of what brings women to these jobs from the beginning and most importantly: how women’s lives are affected by the participation in paid work. I wish to focus on their decision-making, agency, and subjective well-being. Raising awareness of these issues is crucial because the recognition and appreciation of women’s work remains underplayed, not least in Ethiopia where anything to do with gender is under-researched according to one key informant (KI) Tigabu Degu, at the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI). In sum, I hope this paper will contribute to knowledge creation that can also raise the welfare of women – a dual vision that is of great value in feminist research (Reinharz 1992).

To fulfil the overarching aim of this study, the research questions are:

1. How and why do women pursue paid work in the Ethiopian export-oriented garment industry?
2. How might paid work in the Ethiopian garment industry affect women’s decision-making within the household?
3. How do the different social positions of women participating in paid work in the Ethiopian garment industry affect their experiences of agency and well-being?

1.3. Delimitations

Even if this study aims to recognise changing gender relations within the household, it does so to a limited extent. Domestic violence and male resentment against women's participation in paid work is not purposefully examined, despite reports that women employed in menial, low-paid jobs are more likely to experience abuse at home (Tacoli 2012). By focusing on the perspectives of women factory floor workers, this study does not consider those few men who work in the same 'feminine' jobs and may experience feelings of disenfranchisement (Cross 2009). Finally, this study looks at decision-making and power, but it does not go into the details of specific determinants of women's *bargaining power*, which is more of an economic concept that would require the inclusion of quantitative data (Agarwal 1997; Doss 2013).

1.4. Thesis Outline

This thesis is structured around five chapters following the introductory Chapter 1, which outlines the general research problem, purpose and research questions. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the literature review and background to Ethiopia. Against this, I present the conceptual framework strongly relying on feminist theories in Chapter 3, which forms the backdrop to how my empirical findings are analysed. Chapter 4 justifies the chosen methodological underpinnings and describes the process of collecting and handling the data before reflecting on ethical considerations of conducting this type of study. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the analysis and discussion of the data by addressing each research question in turn. Chapter 6 concludes.

2. Literature Review and Background

This chapter begins with an overview of key empirical findings and arguments that scholars and policymakers have put forward on the links between rising female labour force participation rates (LFPR) in the context of export-oriented industrialisation and the effects on empowerment, agency, and well-being. Building on this, section 2.3. uses secondary sources to introduce the reader to Ethiopia's economy and industrial policy, before focusing on employment patterns and women in the garment industry. I will also look at social norms relating explicitly to gender differences in Ethiopia – namely gender norms – that affect women's ability to exercise agency. To further contextualise my research, I will move onto presenting studies that have been done on topics specifically related to my research questions in Ethiopia. In its totality, this chapter informs my research on women's paid work in the garment industry.

2.1. Feminisation of Labour

'Feminisation of labour' is a term coined by Standing (1999) to describe the increased share of women's participation in employment and corresponding deterioration in working conditions under globalisation. One of the ways in which globalisation has taken place is through the rapid transformation of the way production processes are organised because of foreign direct investment (FDI), industrial parks and the encouragement of outsourcing to developing countries. In turn, globalisation and export-oriented industrialisation has had numerous consequences on women's work burdens and ties to the market (Benería et al. 2016).

One of the most prominent feminist arguments for why women are disproportionately doing menial factory jobs in industrial sectors of developing countries is summarised by Elson and Pearson (1981) who state that women's stereotypical nimble finger skills and other gender norms are exploited by companies. According to Seguino's (1997) study on the relationship between export-led industrialisation and the role of gender in South Korea, discriminatory gender norms used by the state and private sector appear to be linked to the rise in female share of manufacturing. A slightly different argument emphasises the importance of keeping costs low to keep export-oriented production globally competitive. This implies that women are overrepresented in the industry because their labour is flexible and cheaper stemming from lower education levels and professional experience (Benería et al. 2016).

In contrast, the neoclassical approach rationalises ‘feminisation of labour’ as the inevitable outcome of employers and workers coming together and making decisions that maximise efficiency under constraints (Jacobsen 2007). Women are assumed to make choices based on perfect information of their life situation, needs, and desires (Anker 1997). The problem with this explanation, put forward by Polachek (1981), is that it dismisses multiple interactions of inequalities, discriminatory gender norms, and power relations.

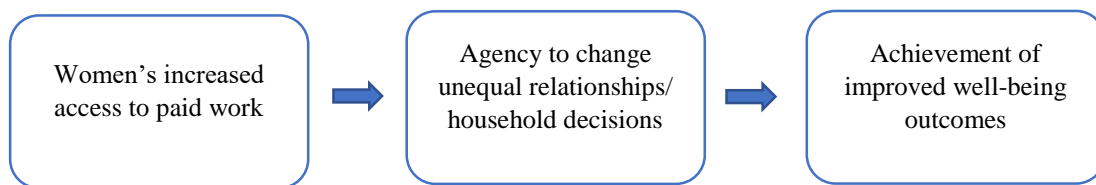
Based on in-depth interviews with female factory workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, “employment in the garment industries is not so much a choice but, rather, a lack of choice in the context of abject poverty and other income source availabilities” (Islam 2016:165). Kabeer (2012:18-21) agrees by stating that poverty or “choice without options” is the key factor behind women’s rising LFPRs in menial jobs. In other cases, “suppression of choice” restricts the labour market options available for women. She also argues that contextual factors must be considered in addition to different degrees of choice and constraint shaping women’s labour market decisions. These include gender norms, work available, as well as the social position of the women and her household, such as age, education, wealth, and marital status.

Whatever the reasons for ‘feminisation of labour’, it is important to not stereotype women workers as simply being low-cost and abundantly available in countries pursuing export-led industrialisation (Pearson 1998). Mohanty (1988:80) originally stated there is no such thing as a passive, homogenous and “oppressed third-world woman” worker. Likewise, it cannot be assumed that accessing paid work in manufacturing automatically empowers women (Ruwanpura 2011). In contrast to these more nuanced ways of representing the ‘other’ women, Krugman (1997) argues that factory jobs with “slave wages” ultimately benefit women because an earning is better than the alternative of living in rural poverty. Based on in-depth studies from other geographical contexts on women workers in manufacturing, scholars have in fact pointed to the complex and varied daily realities, reasons for, and effects of pursuing this type of work (Benería et al. 2016). This leads me to the next section which will discuss discourses and literature on the connection between women’s increased access to incomes via paid work in the export-oriented garment industry and that of empowerment – namely decision-making, agency, and well-being.

2.2. Links to Empowerment, Agency and Well-being

Despite empirical literature suggesting that women's access to paid work does not always lead to improved agency and well-being, policymakers are still drawn to the uplifting and rather reductionist notion that rising female LFPRs automatically increase women's empowerment and well-being (World Bank 2011). This narrative importantly acknowledges that empowerment is a process of change, whereby a person has the agency to acquire the ability to make choices, "define one's goals and act upon them" (Kabeer 1999a:438). However, it is questionable whether this theory of change really is as seamless as illustrated below.

Figure 1: The Process of Empowerment linking women's incomes with agency and well-being outcomes



Source: Adapted from Stevano (2014:62)

Evidence from Colombia's export-oriented flower industry suggests that paid work has increased women's agency, well-being, and self-esteem against men (Friedemann-Sánchez 2006). Applied to garments, Fontana (2009), has pointed to evidence of women workers in the Bangladeshi export-oriented garment industry making more decisions over marriage and fertility after beginning paid work. A similar argument is made by Kabeer (2000) who finds that work in garment factories is associated with higher female status, quality of life and the 'power to choose' provided that it pays more than available options in Bangladesh. On a general level, Sen (1999) ascertains that women's access to paid work is fundamental for increasing their freedom in other areas of life, an assertion that will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3 presenting the Conceptual Framework.

Empirical literature that has found opposite effects include Domínguez et al. (2010) who demonstrate that jobs across Mexico's and Central America's *maquiladora* garment industries may improve women's independence in some cases, but they come at a high cost. These jobs, which are often the result of work for economic survival, offer low pay, appalling working conditions, and lead to health problems. Moreover, women tend to end up with a double work burden. This

phenomenon is especially severe for married mothers because of embedded gendered institutions³ and cultural norms that put household responsibilities on women. Importantly, this literature critiques the implications of Figure 1 by acknowledging “that there are several heterogeneous realities that defy generalisations” (Domínguez et al. 2010:200).

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), there are few in-depth studies that examine the effects of paid work in the export-oriented garment industry. However, there is one noteworthy mixed methods study by Blin (2008) that explores the conflicting individual experiences of women upon working in Mauritius’s garment export-processing-zone. Based on a feminist approach to work, meaning that work encompasses paid *and* unpaid work⁴, it is found that cultural and gender norms as well as women’s initial social position plays a significant role in determining the degree to which women feel they can juggle the double work burden. Inequalities in well-being between women workers essentially depend on whether they have significant responsibilities at home. Those women who are single or have no children, or receive help from relatives, husbands and/or other family members like grandmothers, do not feel they suffer from heavy workloads (Blin 2008).

In sum, feminist economists demonstrate that an analysis of gender norms and *unpaid* work is essential to understand the patterns and outcomes of women’s *paid* work on well-being (Benería et al. 2016). Analysis of literature on time-use demonstrates that even when women participate in paid work that allows for improved material well-being outcomes for themselves and their household members, women are still the ones responsible for unpaid care work (Sayer 2005). The implication of ignoring this is to assume that women have endless amounts of time when in fact many women – especially those who are married and have children – must cut back on leisure time and/or provide lower quality care for their children unless they receive support (Antonopoulos 2009).

2.3. Industrial Policy and Gender Relations in Ethiopia

With a population of about 102 million and annual GDP growth averaging around 10% in the last decade, Ethiopia is the fastest growing economy in SSA and aims to reach low-middle-income

³ This study uses gendered institutions as an umbrella term for discriminatory gender norms that affect men’s and women’s behaviour differently (Mabsout & Van Staveren 2010).

⁴ Unpaid work encompasses non-remunerated work activities, including unpaid care work for children, the elderly or sick; and household domestic work. It tends to not be socially recognised (Antonopoulos 2009).

status by 2025 (World Bank 2018). The poverty rate fell from 44% in 2000 to 24% in 2015/16, and the government of Ethiopia (GoE) continues to be committed to poverty reduction via export-led industrialisation (IMF 2018). The government's vision is ultimately to transform the economy from one predominantly based on low productivity agriculture to an economy that focuses more on manufacturing, as outlined in GTP II (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2016).

Integral to this economic structural transformation is the development of industrial policy, as well as the “prudent combination of market forces and state intervention” according to the former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (2011 in UNECA 2016:103). One such example is the government's development of key infrastructure such as industrial parks. An industrial park is a state-established cluster in a geographically demarcated area with the purpose to attract businesses in specific sectors by providing preferential regulations, and public goods and services (AFDB et al. 2017). Since 2014, the GoE has inaugurated four large-scale industrial parks, and eight more are planned for 2020 (Donahue 2018). The main objective is to attract FDI, which can upgrade its export regime and generate employment, while also integrating more women in the country's economic development (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2016).

2.3.1. The garment industry and labour market trends

The textile and garment subsector, which will be referred to as ‘the garment industry’ in this study, is specifically presented in GTP II as one of the key priority industries for export diversification and employment creation (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2016). Its labour intensity makes it ideal for absorbing the growing share of the working-age population increasingly migrating to (peri-) urban areas in search of work (UNECA 2016).

With major global clothing-retail companies and buyers present in the country, textiles and garments was one of Ethiopia's top three recipient subsectors of FDI in 2016 (AFDB et al. 2017). Ethiopia is spoken of as an attractive destination for light manufacturing despite being landlocked; it has preferential trade access to US and European markets⁵, a proactive industrial policy, cheap electricity, and industrial labour is said to cost only 25% of that of China today (Gelb et al. 2017). No minimum wage legislation exists (Dalberg 2017). Government stability has also been stated as

⁵ The African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) allows duty-free exports of non-oil goods like garments manufactured in SSA to the US; the Everything but Arms (EBA) initiative for the ‘least developed countries’ allows preferences on exports to the EU (UNECA 2016).

a key factor attracting FDI (Gelb et al. 2017; Mihretu and Llobet 2017). However, political disruption associated with recent civil unrest⁶ has been flagged as having a potentially negative impact on investor sentiment (IMF 2018; World Bank 2018).

The GoE has provided numerous incentives to foster growth and job creation of the garment industry. With limited rural job opportunities and unemployment being especially high for those with primary and secondary education in urban areas, faster job creation for non-graduates is an urgent priority (World Bank 2016). Specifically, promoting women and youth empowerment and ensuring their effective participation in development processes, as well as equity in the development outcomes is one of the overarching strategic objectives of GTP II.

At first look, women may appear to be fully integrated in Ethiopia's ambition to become a low-middle-income country. The export-oriented garment industry has opened new employment opportunities for women, whom dominate its workforce, and GTP II expects it will create 174,000 job opportunities (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2016). Nevertheless, women are concentrated further down in the value chain in low-skill and traditionally feminine jobs such as sewing. Their wage barely covers all mandatory expenses, and they are underrepresented in leadership positions (UNDP 2017). Looking at the labour market overall, women's LFPR has increased but they are concentrated in informal work⁷. Women earn on average 28% less than men in Ethiopia, and the female LFPR in paid work is 13% lower than the male LFPR (World Bank 2016).

2.3.2. Gender norms

Although the GoE has ratified numerous conventions supporting gender equality, the implementation process has been weak and Ethiopian women remain disadvantaged compared to men (Ogato 2013; UNDP 2017). The gender parity index indicates education discrepancies, and it worsens in secondary and tertiary levels. This is linked to the discriminatory gender norm expecting girls to undertake time-consuming domestic work, which constrains their ability to attend and perform well in school (UN Women 2014). The problem is particularly pressing in rural areas

⁶ Civil unrest rooted in ethnic tensions has culminated in two nationwide states of emergency since 2015 – one of which is still ongoing. In April 2018, the new Prime Minister Abiyeh Ahmed was sworn into office (Crabtree 2018).

⁷ Informal work includes self-employment in informal enterprises (i.e. small and unregulated); wage employment in informal jobs (i.e. without worker benefits or social protection); and unpaid work in formal or informal enterprises (ILO 2002).

where parents are unable to send girls to school for financial reasons or insufficient school proximity (Ogato 2013). In Ethiopia, it is prevalent for the oldest girl sibling to do care work which infringes on time to rest and play. Alternatively, extended families might ‘foster’ relatively worse-off relatives. These arrangements are usually very exploitative, with young girls being responsible for babysitting and domestic work (Samman et al. 2016).

Moreover, adult women in Ethiopia spend on average between five to six hours per day on providing unpaid work. Men spend significantly fewer hours on unpaid work, except for community service outside the home, something that is true for both urban and rural contexts (Beyene 2015). These everyday subtle social activities essentially convey masculinity or femininity of men and women, thereby cementing their gender roles (Mabsout & Van Staveren 2010).

Parentally arranged marriage and abduction are the manifestation of gender norms, and they play an important role in the lives of women especially from rural Ethiopia. Although norms differ slightly between Ethiopia’s many ethnic groups, women are consistently forced to marry young and earlier than men throughout the country. Marriage is seen as integral to strengthening social ties, and women are frowned upon unless they can have children in Ethiopia. Divorce is deemed a social taboo (Dito 2015). As for work, it is expected of a good man to provide an income. A good woman should work hard for the household and not pursue ‘male’ jobs (ODI 2015).

Gender plays a pivotal role in Ethiopian society. Gender disadvantages in regular patterns of behaviour in Ethiopia are essentially the product of – mainly informal – structures of constraint or gendered institutions. These gendered institutions not only affect Ethiopian women’s education level, work and marriage arrangement, they also impose limits to their agency and decision-making power (Mabsout & Van Staveren 2010). All these are important to consider in looking at the reasons for why women pursue work as well as the effects of paid work.

2.4. Research (gaps) on Women in the Ethiopian Garment Industry

Most studies that exist on Ethiopia’s garment industry focus on issues such as how labour can become more efficient or contribute more to the growing sector’s competitiveness (World Bank 2015; Dalberg 2017). High employee turnover rates are examined from a business case rather than a worker’s case, and even fewer studies examine the effects of this relatively new export industry on the lived experiences of women. This focus might be attributed to the fact that the contribution

of the garment industry to GDP, exports and employment has so far been lower than expected (Dalberg 2017). Since conventional studies of the industry are overrepresented, and research projects appear to be directed to the interest of (often male) investors and managers, important aspects of women's experiences are disregarded.

Those studies that exist have been initiated by the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) (2016) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2017), but the methodology is mostly quantitative, and they do not specifically focus on the garment industry. A recent study on women workers in the Ethiopian manufacturing sector used randomised controlled trial and surveyed women from one export-oriented garment factory located outside one of the larger cities in Ethiopia. They concluded that informal job opportunities are typically preferred as opposed to low-skill industrial jobs, which are seen as a good safety net rather than a long-term job (Blattman & Dercon 2017).

3. Conceptual Framework

Having presented a literature review on women's paid work in the garment industry and given an overview of Ethiopia's industrial policy and gender relations, this chapter will justify a combination of key concepts and theories that are most insightful for the analysis of this study. These include feminist approaches to work, Kabeer's (1999a; 1999b; 2012) conceptualisation of empowerment and agency, and an understanding of well-being as something subjective. In combination with intersectional thinking across other social stratifications apart from gender, these concepts allow for a more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences of paid work.

3.1. Feminist Theory for How and Why Women Pursue Work

Feminist theory argues that conventional wisdom, such as neoclassical approaches to work and gender (inequality), are inadequate in their ability to sufficiently explain the human experience (Reinharz 1992). By ignoring structural mechanisms and constraints, such as gendered institutions, conventional thinking essentially accepts the subordinate position of women (Folbre 1994). Feminist theories, however, provide unique contributions to how people make certain choices as a result of interplaying factors (Kabeer 2000). Gender norms such as stereotypes of women's *natural* strengths in honesty, care, dexterity and greater docility, for example, characterise 'female occupations' in manufacturing (Elson & Pearson 1981:24). Likewise, only certain jobs become available and women may be socialised into thinking they are only qualified for those. This is consistently highlighted in feminist approaches to work and globalisation which question whether women really choose the particular work they do (Anker 1997).

Feminist researchers emphasise the importance of opening up the household when analysing decision-making (Agarwal 1997; Kabeer 1999a). The reason is that the household is a "site of gender inequalities in workload and resource allocation, and power relations that mediate choices and well-being outcomes" (Benería et al. 2016:72). Consequently, the starting point for integrating the role of gender norms into the analysis of pursuing work, and the effects on decision-making, agency, and well-being is that the household can be characterised by a 'cooperative conflict' model. This presumes that households are sites of both cooperation *and* conflict, and women do not act autonomously (Sen 1990). This is a much more realistic view than the narrow neoclassical 'new household economics' model first introduced by Becker (1981).

3.2. Agency and Decision-making Power

Women's empowerment can broadly be defined as processes of change by which "women gain the capacity for exercising strategic forms of agency in relation to their own lives as well as in relation to the larger structures of constraint that position them as subordinate to men" (Kabeer 2012:6). Agency is therefore an essential component of empowerment (Kabeer 1999a)

Kabeer (1999a; 1999b; 2012) writes that power (as well as agency) can be thought of in four main ways: 1) *power over*, implying the capacity to coerce others, 2) *power with*, referring to the exercise of collective power, 3) *power to*, referring to the ability to make decisions and pursue a person's own goals in life despite resistance from others, and 4) *power within*, meaning personal consciousness and a sense of agency. For the purpose of this study, a women's ability to make decisions and personal consciousness are particularly important in order to understand the impact of participating in paid work in the Ethiopian export-oriented garment industry on women's empowerment – especially with regards to agency and intra-household decision-making. The ability to make decisions entails that alternative choices are both available and also imagined to be possible for a person without the costs being punishingly high (Kabeer 1999a). Personal consciousness draws important attention to the fact that empowerment and agency are *not only* about actual decision-making and control over resources as emphasised by the World Bank (2011). While these notions are central to a sound understanding of empowerment, it is also crucial to be sensitive to women's subjective perceptions and individual power to pursue self-interest, which may differ from an outsider perspective (Basu 1996 in Kabeer 1999a).

Processes of agency and decision-making power are socially embedded in local cultural contexts. Therefore, in contexts with highly gendered institutions – such as Ethiopia – it is essential to be sensitive to the internalisation of discriminatory gender norms. While decision-making and other more direct forms of empowerment such as independence and autonomy may not be visible at first to the outside perspective, there could be more indirect forms of empowerment. This might involve women adhering to so-called "public image" and "traditional decision maker" but at the same time exerting an increase in "backstage" influence in decision-making processes" (Kabeer 1999a:448). By encompassing this view, this study examines the effects on decision-making in and of itself, as well as the intricate dynamics of subjective experiences of agency and well-being by the women workers themselves.

Building on the above, women's agency needs to be theorised in the context of gender norms and power dynamics. This is something that Koggel (2003) criticises Sen (1999) for not doing. Sen (1999) essentially argues that paid employment for women is crucial for increasing their freedom, agency and well-being in all areas of life. He states that "freedom in one area (that of being able to work outside the household) seems to help foster freedom in others (enhancing freedom from hunger, illness, and relative deprivation)" (Sen 1999:194). His approach of not victimising women by seeing them as agents of change is appreciated by this study. Nevertheless, his reasoning that increasing female LFPRs tends to *only* have positive impacts on all women does not align well with my research questions that aim to recognise the complexity of various experiences by women of different social positions. Instead it risks homogenising women, as well as conditions of work. It is true that Sen (1999) points to culture as sometimes hindering a woman's ability to use and control the income she makes from employment. However, his idea that education is often the solution dismisses structures of constraint that are sometimes so deeply entrenched that increasing women's education and employment is insufficient.

Taking a step back, the assumption that participation in paid work is a marker of freedom is also problematic given Kabeer's (2012:18-21) insights into "choice without options" or "suppression of choice" being key factors behind the rising female LFPR in menial jobs under globalisation. Furthermore, Sen's (1999) enthusiasm for women's participation in paid work as leading to better agency and well-being resonates with the simplistic theory of change narrative on empowerment (Figure 1). For these reasons, Kabeer's (2012) conceptualisation of empowerment in light of larger context-specific structures of constraint is better suited to theories of agency and well-being.

3.3. Well-being

The mainstream economic approach to well-being is that it can be measured by aggregate or average income and wealth (Benería et al. 2016). Nevertheless, this study sees income on its own as inadequate for evaluating a good life because it can be distributed differently within the household, and certain people may need more to generate the same level of well-being. To some extent, well-being involves the material circumstances of a person, including their income, standards of living, consumption levels, education levels, health in terms of food security, and time poverty/leisure time. However, it can also be seen as something subjective to the person's contextual evaluation of these. White (2010:160) uses the expression "doing well – feeling good"

to summarise both the material and subjective aspects of well-being, which is useful for this study. The expression implies that well-being is formed through subjective meanings of people's experiences and interactions, which makes it a relational and dynamic process. Since this study aims to uncover the experiences of women workers as described by themselves, the subjective approach to well-being is an appropriate perspective to have.

Some scholars shed light on the fact that subjective assessments of well-being can be challenging to use. Sen (1990) argues that women could have biased perceptions of self-interest by prioritising someone else's well-being before their own, which leads to weaker decision-making power. However, Agarwal (1997) argues that women are not passive and *can* in fact pursue self-interest. They might make decisions on what is socially accepted within the gendered institutions of their local community, but altruism – such as caring for someone – often coexists with (long-term) self-interest. They can also do some activities in secret for their own individual power and well-being that their husbands, for example, do not know about. These are all important features to consider.

In relation to paid work, a proper understanding of women's well-being must account for factors of time-use. In fact, according to Sen (1990), the double burden of combining long hours of paid and unpaid work has consequences for the development of human capabilities, hence any examination of women's well-being must look at their time-use. Folbre (2006) agrees and brings attention to levels of stress affecting subjective experiences of well-being. Yet, time constraints are often ignored in conventional narratives that assume women's participation in paid work automatically increases agency and well-being. Men are also impacted by time constraints, but women are especially impacted as they tend to be responsible for both paid and unpaid work (Antonopoulos 2009).

This study aims to go beyond simply recognising women's unpaid work in terms of objective time-use, by also analysing it in terms of how burdensome and tiring the time spent working is. This can only be done by looking at experiences and the concept of time poverty. Time poverty can be defined as “the need to spend long hours working (in either the labour market or domestic work) because the alternative would be (even deeper) consumption poverty” (Bardasi & Wodon 2010:45). The implication is that the person either comes from a poor household or would fall into poverty were he/she to not work as many hours. Time poverty is a useful concept for this study because it allows a distinction to be made between women of various backgrounds and social positions. Some

women might work long hours because of economic necessity, while others might do it *more* out of choice.

3.4. Intersectionality

Intersectionality was first introduced by the scholar Crenshaw (1989) and highlights how analyses of gender can only be meaningful if they are analysed in relation to other social differentiations such as race, ethnicity, family type and class. The concept of intersectionality is important because it recognises that various categories of difference in societies, institutions and individual lives interact with power, thereby creating a continuum of different experiences (Davies 2008:68). Given this study's qualitative research design, it allows room for social position and the diverse experiences of women to be interwoven with concepts such as agency and well-being. For example, women can embrace multiple identities of being working-class women, married women, mothers, and so on. Therefore, it is essential to theorise "women as a heterogenous category", based on the understanding that initial social positions and related conditions of a woman and her household affect how and why woman participate in paid work, what they decide over and other outcomes related to agency and well-being (Stevano 2014:170).

3.5. Theoretical Summary

This study will apply the concepts and theories mentioned in this chapter to varying degrees in order to answer the three research questions. Starting with a wider, feminist conceptualisation of work, as encompassing both paid and unpaid work, this study aims to make the invisible visible. It relies heavily on Kabeer's (1999a; 1999b; 2012) theoretical insights on intra-household power relations, gender norms, choice-problematisation, and other interplaying factors that represent a significant improvement to conventional thinking on women's participation in paid work.

Crucially, women's empowerment is viewed as a process, whereby agency plays an essential role. Agency can incorporate both actual decision-making, as well as a *sense* of agency. Likewise, a nuanced understanding of well-being builds on an understanding of both material circumstances and subjective evaluations of these (White 2010). Individual recollections and perceptions of time-use and time poverty are also important to consider in this study's discussion of well-being.

Given the emphasis on the above, this study will open for a wider variety of experiences within and between women. Great value will be given to bringing the perspectives of women factory floor

workers to the forefront, hence the collected data is qualitative. It is approached inductively to develop themes, before going back to theoretical concepts discussed in the literature above to deductively expand on particular context-specific themes.

4. Methodological Underpinnings

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the research design underlying this study, followed by the ontological and epistemological position, my process of conducting research in Ethiopia, and a site description. The sampling and methods for data collection, as well as data handling, will also be presented. Finally, this chapter will discuss reflexivity and ethical considerations. Limitations will be presented throughout.

4.1. Research Strategy and Design

This study applies a qualitative research strategy to gather complex and deep understandings of women's lived experiences upon accessing and participating in paid work on the factory floor. Since my ambition is to complement existing reports on Ethiopia's garment industry overall with a detailed, locally grounded and nuanced case study, a qualitative methods research strategy is well-suited.

The research design is based on a single case study with features of a cross-sectional design (Bryman 2012). Field research was undertaken in a single location to allow for in-depth analysis, but the crucial point of interest and unit of analysis is the sample of women I studied. The single location was Shin Textile Solutions Co., Ltd (Shints) in BLIP, Addis Ababa. The focus lay in gathering information on the individual experiences, perceptions and opinions among various women working in the export-oriented garment industry.

The case study is an exemplifying case because the working conditions and women's experiences within the factory, most probably resonate with those of other export-oriented garment factories in Ethiopia⁸. While it is not possible to generalise the findings of this study to the whole of Ethiopia's export-oriented garment industry, it still provides insights into key social processes (Bryman 2012). In this case: it sheds light on the simplistic narrative that paid work automatically empowers women by providing insights on the reasons for why and how women pursue work in the Ethiopian export-oriented garment industry, how paid work affects their intra-household decision-making, and how women of various social positions experience agency and well-being.

⁸ Research from other countries, however, suggests that larger foreign-owned factories within the export-oriented garment industry tend to offer relatively higher wages and better working conditions than those export factories that are domestically owned (Kabeer 2012). This implies that some differences may exist.

4.2. Ontological and Epistemological Perspective

In this study, I take an ontological and epistemological perspective guided by social constructivism and feminism. Social constructivism ascertains that individuals subjectively understand their experiences. Hence, there are several diverse meanings that arise because of interactions with the world through social norms (Creswell 2013). Knowledge is consequently socially situated and serves somebody's purpose, which highlights the importance of approaching it critically (Moses and Knutsen 2012). For example, this study counteracts the idea of one truth and the dichotomy of whether participating in paid work is either good or bad for women. One way it does so is by researching women of different social positions.

More specifically, this study hinges on feminist epistemologies. These view gender as a social construct and collectively argue that traditional male-biased epistemologies systematically exclude the idea that women can be agents of knowledge. To respond to this problem, feminist research goes beyond solely "adding women" to their analyses or victimising women as subject to male domination (Harding 1987:3-5). Rather, it is about shifting the focus from *women's work* in the garment industry to *women's experiences* from their own perspective and from across other categories of difference and identity.

Additionally, this study originates in the central goal to conduct transformative research for those women who are concentrated in menial, low paid work within the export-oriented garment industry. This further justifies the use of a case study because it can "document aspects of women's lives and achievements for future secondary analysis and future action on behalf of women" (Reinharz 1992:171). The goal of this inquiry is hence to raise consciousness on issues of effect, decision-making, agency, and well-being in an intrinsic way that is "relevant to women's unequal social position" (Lather 1991:71 in Creswell 2013:29).

4.3. Research in Ethiopia and Access

Conducting research in Ethiopia comes with several challenges. Even if I only started my data collection after more than five months of working in Addis Ababa, which allowed me to familiarise myself with the local context and culture, I quickly found that to acquire any information, I needed connections. Thanks to contacts I made, both formally while interning for the UNDP and via informal relations outside of work, I was able to meet garment industry stakeholders, such as two separate factory managers as well as a labour union chairman of a third factory who shared their

perspectives and showed me the factory premises. Even so, I faced reluctance as soon as I explained my research aim and methods focusing on interviews with female factory floor workers. I suspect access to speak to these workers via factory management was difficult for the following reasons: my positionality as a young, foreign woman in a society with numerous gendered institutions; my lacking previous acquaintanceships; and the suspicion of journalists, human rights activists and Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who are known to both pressure factories to improve work conditions and expose human rights abuses.

All throughout, my interpreter was indispensable for conducting qualitative field research, gaining access to the appropriate informants, and understanding the language, local unspoken rules, and issues of hierarchy. We met via a mutual university friend, and she was recruited on the grounds of her English skills, as well as prior experience working with gender for an NGO in Ethiopia. She was familiar with the approximate area of the field research site, and her mother tongue language – Amharic – is the same as the working language of the factory workers. With her assistance, and after I had presented an overview of my study to the Ethiopian Textile Industry Development Institute, I was able to receive a “letter requesting cooperation” with whichever factory I wanted to. The Director who signed the letter turned out to be a gatekeeper and gave clearance to conduct my research the way I had originally intended to.

After presenting the letter of cooperation to the Human Resource Manager at Shints – a contact I had received from my interpreter’s friend, my research request was supported. Nevertheless, the Human Resource Manager first questioned my approach, and gave the impression that the women I wanted to interview would not have anything interesting or valuable to say being furthest down in the organisational hierarchy⁹. Qualitative research focusing on the experiences of women is rare in Ethiopia, and it is seen as inferior to quantitative and androcentric research. Hence, I had to negotiate complete access by carefully justifying what I needed, while ensuring my research was loyal to the interests of the women factory floor workers who participated in my study. After negotiating access and relevant logistics, I was allowed to spend nine full days in the factory between January 25 and February 10, 2018.

⁹ His reaction suggests gynopia, being the inability to ‘see’ women or perceive them in undistorted ways (Reinharz 1992).

4.4. Site Description

Shints is a Korean-owned firm that produces and exports predominantly sports clothing to Europe and North America, including several significant retail brands (Interview with Human Resource Manager). The firm is located in the southeastern outskirts Addis Ababa in BLIP, an industrial park covering 156 ha with a total of 20 sheds by 12 export-oriented firms that mostly specialise in garments and textiles. Since it is already fully occupied, they are in the process of building BLIP phase II, in collaboration with the World Bank, which will also include dorms (IPDC 2015). Shints has been operational in BLIP since late 2014. At the time of research, 3800 people were employed in their factory in Ethiopia, of which 86% were women. They work six full days per week, and the factory floor workers are mostly from rural Ethiopia and between the age of 18 and 27. Many are unmarried (Interview with Human Resource Manager).

Although jobs are not officially gender-segregated, it was striking how most operators on the sewing, cutting and printing machines were women. Men dominated the higher-paying mechanical and office factory jobs. The after-tax income for factory floor workers starts at ETB 800, which is equivalent to roughly USD 29 per month and considered extremely low in Addis Ababa where expenses are much higher than elsewhere in the country. Each factory floor worker is assigned to one specific task in a designated department and assembly line, and the hierarchical differences between employees was reinforced by managers and office staff sitting on the top floor that looked over the entire factory floor of workers. The bright lights and heat from inside the factory hit me every time, and Ethiopian music started pumping across the factory sheds in the afternoons to “motivate the workers” (Interview with Human Resource Manager).

Transportation services for normal working hours, lunch, and access to the factory clinic are offered to the workers free of charge. According to the one nurse in the factory, there were few significant health problems, with headaches, menstrual cramps and needlestick injuries being the most commonly reported (Interview with Nurse). A few women workers, however, asserted they had kidney problems from not being allowed to use the bathroom or drink water throughout the day. Several women also said in the interviews that they had respiratory infections from exposure to dust particles and chemicals in the factory. The factory labour union was only a few months old, and their work centred around worker “discipline”, including issues of punctuality, compliance

with Shints’ rules, and disagreements over treatment of poorly workers (Interview with Labour Union Cashier).

4.5. Preparations, Sampling, and Methods for Data Collection

Since I sought to explore the impact of paid work in the Ethiopian export-oriented garment industry on women’s empowerment - mostly from the perspective of the women’s own experiences – I collected data based on a variety of qualitative methods. These included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The women are considered ‘knowers’, hence this study refers to them as informants.

Table 1: Overview of Data Methods

Method	Role	Number	Dates
Semi-structured interviews	Women factory floor workers	17	Jan-Feb 2018
	Husbands of interviewed factory floor workers	2	Feb 2018
	Factory staff KIs (human resource manager; labour union active member and cashier; nurse)	3	Jan-Feb 2018
	External KIs (research fellows; women’s empowerment advisors & department head)	5	Jan-Feb 2018
FGDs	Women factory floor workers	4	Feb 2018

4.5.1. Pilot study

The prior visits to three other export-oriented garment factories in December 2017 and early January 2018 increased my knowledge of the industry on the ground, and I was able to pilot my interview guides on women in one of the factories. Even if the informants had slightly higher status jobs than those of the women I ended up interviewing in Shints, the pilot interviews enabled me to sharpen my questions and practice my interview technique.

4.5.2. Sampling

I applied several approaches to the sampling strategy that catered to my purpose. To answer my research questions, the actual factory – Shints located in BLIP – anchored the findings to an institution within the larger export-oriented garment industry. The reason for choosing this particular factory in the end was for convenience sampling. It was near to Addis Ababa, and I had a point of contact within the factory.

As for sampling of informants, they had never formally been employed before entering the export-oriented garment industry. This is because I was interested in paid work in the garment industry

specifically and its effects on women. They also had to have earned at least one pay-check from the garment industry. A combination of purposive, snow-ball and convenience sampling were used to ensure the sample of women factory workers was diversified. An employee, reporting to the Human Resource Manager, selected women who were free in an assembly line with no work and who volunteered to speak to me. She also had to speak Amharic. In the end, the women I interviewed had a range of demographic characteristics and social positions (see appendix A). All except two were from rural Ethiopia, and their ages ranged between 19 and 31. All were factory floor workers but in different departments (mostly sewing). Ten out of 17 women had attended grade 9 or 10 (first cycle of secondary education) but did not complete; five women had completed primary education; and two women left school at grade 3. The number of married, unmarried, and divorced informants is seven; nine; and one respectively. Three of the married women, one of the unmarried, and the one divorced women had children, all of whom were very young.

The composition of women in the FGDs followed a similar pattern. In the final FGD and woman worker interview, the women were identified as friends of a worker I had already interviewed. These interviews took place at the home of the informant or at a local café they chose themselves. The two husbands I interviewed were the only ones who volunteered after asking the married women I interviewed if I could speak to them. The KIs outside of the factory were approached by myself. A detailed list of the informants is provided in Appendix A.

4.5.3. Semi-structured interviews

In total, I carried out semi-structured interviews with 17 women factory floor workers. The time-length ranged from about an hour to one hour and 45 minutes. The four FGDs lasted between one hour to one hour and 30 minutes, with the fourth FGD extending two hours because it was held in a more flexible environment outside work hours on a ‘day off’ (paid) work. A potential limitation of holding the majority of interviews and FGDs on the factory grounds is that the informants could have felt less comfortable to speak openly. However, we always sat in a room that was separated from the actual factory sheds, and we made sure no one could overhear.

Semi-structured interviews allowed the women factory floor workers to express their opinions in response to questions centred on the meaning of paid work in the export-oriented garment industry; time-use and allocation of labour between different types of productive and reproductive activities; decision-making; what doing well/feeling good means to them; how their life has changed since

starting this type of work, and so forth. Each interview started with questions on demographic details, such as household composition, marital status, and age (see appendix B for interview guide). This helped compare women’s answers and narratives related to different social positions (Bryman 2012).

A similar approach was taken to interviewing two husbands about selected issues, such as their wife’s job, how it has changed their life and who makes the household decisions. It added a more holistic outlook on gender relations, household dynamics, and women’s empowerment. At the end of every interview I asked them to verbally recall what they had done over the past 24 hours, as well as their last day off (on a Sunday), and to let me know whether this was any different from a typical day. They were free to comment and discuss how they felt about each activity, while I took notes and filled out the time-use sheet on the spot. The data accumulated into 2x19 time-use sheets that added additional layers of information. An example can be seen in Table 2 and Table 3, as recalled by one informant, named Selam, age 23.

Table 2: Recalled Time-use for Last Typical Day Working in Factory (past 24 hours)

Time	What were you doing? (main activity)	Remarks
5:30am	Wakes up	
5:30-7:00am	Goes to the toilet; makes bed; washes face; dresses son for school; packs son’s lunchbox	Doesn’t have breakfast because there is no time to prepare food and eat
7:00-7:15am	Takes son to school	
7:15-7:30am	Runs to make it on time for work	Feels stressed about coming late because they deduct salary for the day and don’t allow her inside the factory
7:30-Noon	Works on the sewing machines	
Noon-1:00pm	Eats lunch	
1:00-1:20pm	Meets with supervisor	
1:20-5:30pm	Works on the sewing machines	Challenging to sit all day
5:30-6:00pm	Walks home	
6:00-11:00pm	Collects water; brings son home; cooks dinner; prepares son’s lunchbox for next day; washes son’s clothes; prepares coffee	Asks neighbours and friends for help to care for son after school because she is unable to pick him up herself; argues with husband when she comes home late from work; her husband does no household work
11:00pm	Goes to bed	

Table 3: Recalled Time-use for the Last Typical Day Off Working in Factory

Time	What were you doing? (main activity)	Remarks
6:30am	Wakes up	
6:30-7:00am	Washes face; gets dressed	
7:00-9:00am	Goes to church	With husband and son
9:00-11:00am	Cooks breakfast and prepares coffee	
11:00am-6:00pm	Washes clothes; showers; helps her son take a bath; cooks lunch; prepares son's lunchbox for next day; bakes injera	Son gets different food (pasta), which is more expensive and considered better
6:00-8:00pm	Cooks dinner and prepares coffee	
8:00pm	Goes to bed	

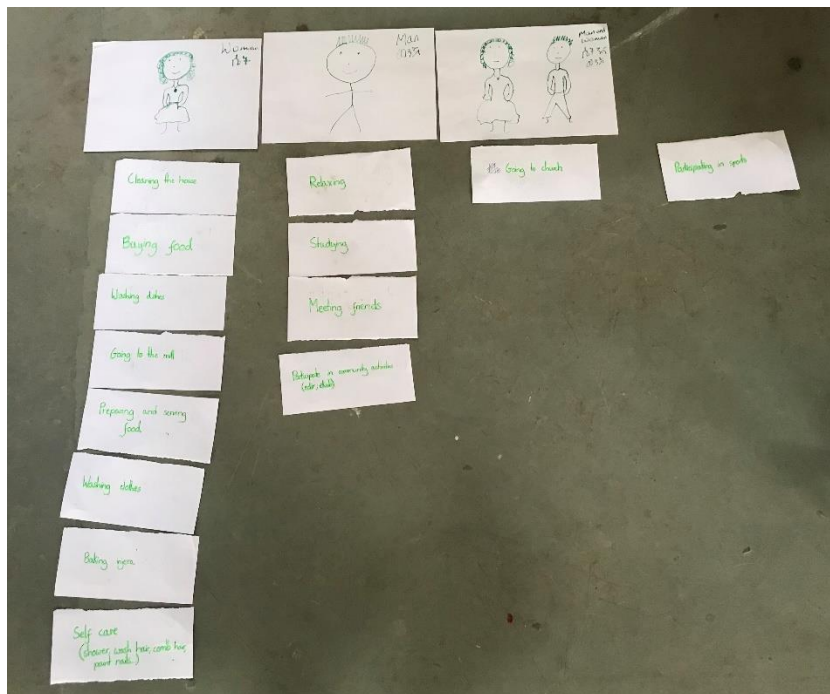
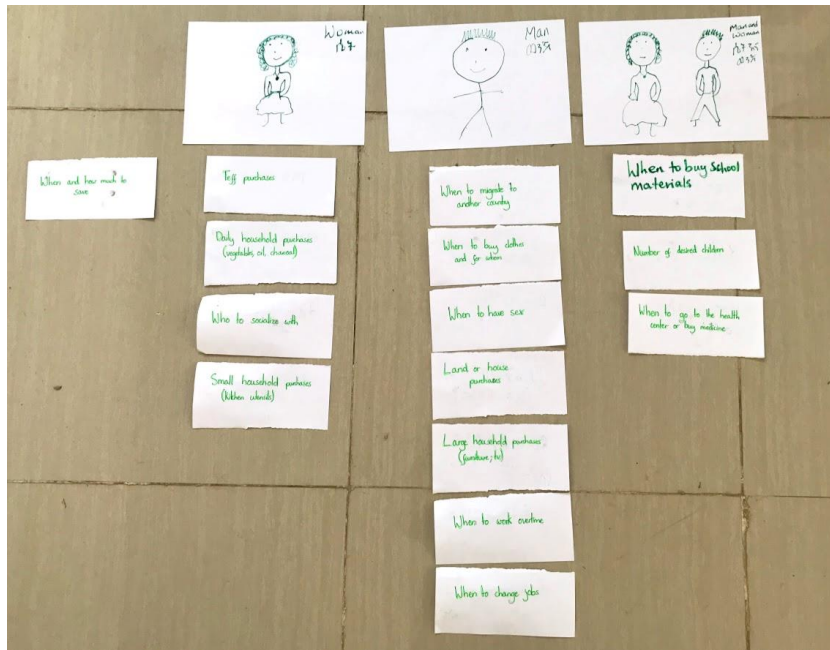
Additionally, I conducted semi-structured interviews with two types of KIs to make the study more thorough (see table 1). These interviews, which sometimes took the form of conversations, helped situate the women's experiences within the wider context.

4.5.4. Focus group discussions

The second method involved FGDs with women factory floor workers. FGDs are useful for obtaining "joint construction of meaning" (Bryman 2012:502). However, disagreements can be equally meaningful because participants can review or further support their arguments on their own terms in response to differing opinions, thereby also reflecting on their own social position (Kitzinger 1994 in Bryman 2012). This also allows the researcher to tease out factors that may lie behind different views and experiences. Although my initial goal was to have separate FGDs for married women, unmarried women, and another mixed group, all FGDs ended up being mixed. Nevertheless, the quality of the FGDs was still high – not least because the women could discuss and reflect on differences between themselves.

One activity I used within the FGDs was 'pile-sorting', inspired by an interactive tool that CARE International (in Bourey et al. 2012) uses to allow community groups to reflect on gender norms and power relations that inform intra-household decision-making. I organised the group so everyone stood up and could see the three pile headings I had placed on the floor – one with a drawing of a woman, the other with a man, and the third with both a man and woman standing side by side. I then distributed a set of cards with different decisions (and later also activities and household tasks) to the women and asked them to place each one under one of three piles: men, women, or both. Photo 1 illustrates the activity outcome.

Photo 1: Pile-sorting Activity on Decision-Making and Time-Use



For this particular activity, my interpreter's role extended to that of a moderator's to ease the flow of discussion. This activity was participatory and helped evoke explanations for workloads and activities rooted in gender norms. The visual material also became sources of data and helped triangulate and increase thoroughness of the interviews.

4.5.5. Other methods

Time-use data, as mentioned previously, complemented the views expressed by the same woman earlier on. Since most of the data collection happened on the factory grounds, participant observation was inevitable, which I incorporated in my field notes. All in all, the multiple methods outlined above contributed to more layers of information and a richer understanding by refining another data source (Reinharz 1992).

4.6. Data Handling and Analysis

All questions and answers were translated by my interpreter on the spot. Later, I transcribed my notes of the women's answers and sent to Liyu for cross-check. Former Ethiopian classmates from my Bachelor at the University of London also verified some of the translations from Amharic to English.

Throughout the research process, I sought qualitative trustworthiness. Since this study focuses on the experiences of women, I put more attention on providing "thick descriptions" (Bryman 2012: 392).

The data was analysed using a framework approach to thematic analysis. The strength of thematic analysis is it can pinpoint repeated patterns of meaning and themes that can be compared and contrasted across many individuals, while not losing the perspective's connection with other parts of each individual's account (Gale et al. 2013). Given my aim to look at women of various social positions, this type of analysis following Gale et al.'s (2013:4-6) seven-stage procedure for analysis was ideal.

4.7. Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

Throughout my research, I have ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of data sources by giving pseudonyms to every woman worker and husband informant. All informants except two women workers and two FGDs were recorded. For those who did not want to be recorded, my interpreter and I sat down immediately afterward to write down everything that had been said. Although the use of an interpreter distanced myself from the women, it was valuable that we were both female around the same age as the women we interviewed. This downplayed power dynamics, something that feminist scholars emphasize as crucial (Harding 1987).

I received oral consent from everyone I interviewed. I was clear and honest about my research

purpose and status as a student, and the informants knew they did not have to answer any questions if they did not want to (see appendix B). For me personally, it was important to establish a rapport. Hence, I always spent at least a few minutes at the beginning of each interview and FGD to talk informally about myself and my family as this is an important part of someone's identity in Ethiopia.

Funder (2005) draws attention to the challenges of academic bias in field research. Hence, I tried to have an 'open mind', despite my background inevitably influencing the things I see and understand. The pile-sorting activity enabled consciousness-raising between the informants. Several women exclaimed surprise at how much time they as women spent on domestic work. It was almost a channel for reciprocity because even if I have no *direct* power to transform the lives of these women I interviewed, this activity was an empowering and reflective process, as argued by Madriz (in Bryman 2012: 504). One woman expressed at the end of FGD 2 how she felt much more relaxed because she was able to talk about what was bottled up inside of her. She felt happy that I had asked questions about her opinions because "no one is interested in our lives."

With regards to reflexivity over methods, conducting a survey could have teased out the *extent* of diversity between women. Nevertheless, this study focused on exploring the reasons for difference between women's pursuit of paid work, the effects on decision-making, and their experiences.

5. Analysis and Discussion

This chapter summarises and discusses the key findings related to the purpose of this study, bringing together the qualitative data I collected and analysed. The first section addresses the initial research question, which looks at how and why women pursue paid work in the export-oriented garment industry. The following section centres around answering the second research question on the effects on women's intra-household decision-making. The final section looks at pivotal points of empowerment and women's work in the export-oriented garment industry, namely the experiences of agency and well-being. Being attentive to the social position of the women informants, it challenges the simplistic narrative that women are automatically empowered upon participating in paid work.

5.1. How and Why Women Pursue Paid Work

To understand the various ways in which women experience work in the export-oriented garment industry, it is important to first shed light on how and why they pursue work. The motivations that most frequently arose in the interviews and FGDs were the need for money as well as the desire to gain transferable skills. For those women who had done domestic work before, 'choosing the garment industry for its greater freedom' was a reoccurring theme. Conversations with the majority of women, however, clearly revealed that economic necessity in the context of no other decent available options¹⁰ was by far the primary reason for pursuing work in the garment industry. This is supported by Kabeer (2012) who teases out the multi-faceted nature of household poverty leading women to take up paid work in developing countries. This is important because informants' decision to pursue work relies on numerous contingencies that are addressed below.

5.1.1. Work as best alternative for women with low education levels

Several women in the factory explained that their relatively low level of education was the reason for them not having any better choices available for paid work. "Failing" specifically grade 10 and the state of being "uneducated" were frequently brought up as reasons for starting to work in the garment industry and not being able to land a better job. As found in Mains' (2007) ethnographic research on youth in urban Ethiopia, education generates expectations among young people that they will be able to lead lives that involve progress. The reality of *not* receiving a sufficiently high

¹⁰ Other options that were mentioned as available – but considered much worse - were labourous work on outdoor construction sites in the heat.

education has the opposite effect. This was evident throughout my field research whereby a job in the garment industry was considered the “most suitable job for uneducated women like us” (Informant 1 in FGD 1). This touches upon the perceived suitability of certain types of work in the garment industry that extends women’s domestic roles, an aspect that will be addressed later. For now, it suggests how level of education restricts choice.

Being a girl from rural Ethiopia reduces the chance of obtaining an education, and during conversations with my interpreter, she suggested that the national grade 10 exam is seen as a key indicator of whether you will do well in life. While this is just one person’s opinion, several women alluded to this idea. One woman, age 21, who had done no other paid work before joining Shints over one year ago, explained that her father had originally planned for her to stay in the family house and do domestic work. The reason was because she never passed her grade 10 exam. Consequently, she left for Addis Ababa with a friend, who had heard about work in the garment industry. Birtukan left school after grade 3 and touches upon the same issue of women not receiving much support to pursue or continue their education. This restricts the jobs available for women to pursue.

Birtukan, age 22: Since I am the first child in my family, they wanted me to care for my younger siblings, rear the cattle and collect firewood. My father is a farmer, so he does not see the use of schooling young girls. That’s why I was never able to get educated.

After her father was going to marry her off with a man she did not know, Birtukan ran away to Addis Ababa where she first started doing precarious domestic work for a family before getting a job in Shints.

Not making it past a certain grade level is a reoccurring topic that came up in women’s answers to why they started working in the garment industry. This suggests that paid work in the garment industry is not necessarily an active pursuit in and of itself, but rather an outcome of economic necessity in an environment of lacking employment opportunities, genuine choice, and/or education. While skills acquisition was emphasised less often as a reason for pursuing work in the garment industry, it still came up in many interviews as means to make up for the low pay. It was spoken of as fulfilling the desire of self-improvement from being “uneducated”, especially for those with no children. This points to a level of agency in the decision-making process to start work in

the garment industry because there is a sense of acting in one's own interest based on the ability to access information.

Moreover, there were disagreements among the informants regarding the ability to develop skills. In one FGD, a woman asserted that “the honest reason why most women work here is not for the skills, but for the money to send their kids to school and to buy food.” In fact, one woman said she did not even know what work was done in the factory when she came to the factory gates one morning; she just needed a job. Work in the garment industry therefore may simply be for the reason of ensuring the family's welfare in a context of lacking opportunities.

5.1.2. Work to meet survival needs of family

Pursuing work in the garment industry, simply as an economic necessity to make ends meet, was noticeably present throughout my conversations with those women whose households are dependent on women's incomes for survival. Girum Abebe, researcher at the EDRI, raised a similar point that those who pursue work in the garment industry and end up staying longer than the average relatively short turnover rate¹¹ tend to be those with no other options – often being poorly educated rural-to-urban migrants largely devoid of family support. The narratives of Chaltu and Selam illustrate this point.

Chaltu is 31 years old and originally from Gamo Gofa in southern Ethiopia. She has worked in sewing for almost two years and has two daughters, who she lives together with in the same house as her cousin's family. She earns ETB 1600 per month after-tax, which is equivalent to roughly USD 57. When I asked her what she makes working overtime, she looked at me blankly and said she did not even know what she would earn if she did *not* work overtime. She had never had the option. By option she meant that her overtime salary is just enough to pay for her share of the rent and to provide for her daughters. Her husband left a few years ago, and she still has no idea where he is. In her lifetime she has made a living from collecting fuelwood, cleaning homes, doing labour work on construction sites, and pulping coffee beans, but it barely enabled her to get by – especially being a single mother. Among other things, she was only able to send her daughter to school two years after everyone else. Chaltu expressed dismay over the low salary but pursuing work in the garment industry was entirely out of necessity. This is emphasised by her largest fear being the

¹¹ The turnover rate of employees in Shints for the last quarter of 2017 was 107% (Interview with Human Resource Manager).

closure of Shints because “if it wasn’t for this factory, no one working here would be able to survive.” Returning home to where she was born is not an option “because they have nothing there. There is no soap or food and the roads are difficult to travel on.” This description of where she comes from suggests that she comes from a place absent of basic infrastructure, and a poorer household with none of the necessities required for material well-being.

Meanwhile, Selam is 23 years old and has a son, age five. Her husband does irregular manual work loading rocks onto construction vehicles. Like Chaltu, she has worked for two years in sewing in Shints, and she has neither a tv, radio or cooking stove at home. Before joining the factory she sold tella, a traditional Ethiopian beverage in an informal beer house, but the money was never enough for her and her family because “the money would disappear before the end of the month.” When she heard that Shints was recruiting workers from her district, she initiated the idea to her husband who gave her permission to do this type of work.

These two narratives touch upon important issues, suggesting that pursuit and subsequent continuation of work in the garment industry for some women is driven by economic necessity to provide for their families, raise their children, pay rent and to put food on the table. The same thing is observed in conversations with several other mothers, with young children, who are either single, divorced, widowed or have an unemployed husband. For these women, it could be useful to think of employment in the export-oriented garment industry as closer toward the survival-oriented income-generation end of a continuum as opposed to more accumulation-oriented income generation at the other (Kabeer 2012). They cannot afford to stay at home, and there appears to be no other choice that these women perceive as possible.

Returning to Selam, her experience reveals that although it was her own idea to pursue work in the garment industry, her husband gave his final consent. This was most probably because of the economic need for his wife to earn an income to meet the household’s daily survival needs. It also points to the importance of considering the decision-making process that women go through via other people prior to pursuing paid work in the industry, something that will be discussed in the following section.

5.1.3. Men’s influence on women pursuing paid work

The great majority of women had heard about the job opportunity in Shints from a social contact, a close friend or an older – often male – family member. Interestingly, most women said they made

the decision *by themselves* to start working, but they referred to family dynamics and gendered expectations as they elaborated their discussion. This challenges simplistic and individualistic explanations for why certain choices are made. Rather, participating in paid work is an intricate outcome of multiple factors including intra-household bargaining processes. All women who were married before starting paid work in the garment industry had acquired permission from their husbands. This was even true for those who recalled the idea as being their own because the husband always had to know of the plan before it was realised. In some cases it was the husband's own idea in light of economic necessity; most times it was the wife's idea leading to negotiations between the spouses.

Previous research suggests that some husbands do not permit their wives to work for lack of trust (Stevano 2014). According to one factory floor worker, called Demitu, her husband was originally unwilling to let her go and work in Shints because the salary was so low it seemed pointless. Nevertheless, when she convinced him that she would be able to contribute to paying the rent with her salary, they made a joint decision for her to start. For her personally, it was never the salary that attracted her to pursue work in the garment industry: "I wanted to use my body and work. This was my only option for not staying at home, and domestic work [in someone else's home] was never an option anyways because I'm married." This indicates how established gender norms constrain women's available choices as to deciding the direction of their lives.

Gender norms in combination with women's varying social positions strongly determine what kinds of work are suitable for women. While Demitu's process of pursuing paid work is not reflective of a survival-oriented choice without any other options, as some of the examples mentioned earlier, it is reflective of a restricted choice because there are structural factors that constrain the kinds of work that women do. Hence, her negotiation reveals a degree of informal decision-making power by renegotiating the power relations and achieving a higher intra-household status by contributing to the significant household expense of rent. At the same time, she still honours the traditional decision-maker – her husband.

When economic necessity for households is less severe, it appears that gender norms solidify the negative approach to women's pursuit of paid work. When one woman failed her grade 10 exam, her older brother brought her to Addis Ababa and supported her pursuit of vocational skills training in hair-dressing and later also textiles. She explained in a regretful tone that "it is our fate. Our

parents could not educate us because they were poor... our families raise us this way.” Meanwhile, her brother continued to go to school and had a Master by the time of the interview. The informant actually wanted to continue her studies and become a nurse, but her future was almost pre-determined by her brother. His unconscious biases led him to finance skills acquisition in a traditionally more feminine and low-skilled occupation, which further cements the influence of gender norms. This suggests that it is not only poverty that leads women to pursue paid work in the export-oriented garment industry. Gendered power relations impact women’s ability to act independently, and it is not unusual for men to influence women’s participation in paid work. These in turn have implications for how women’s empowerment via paid work should be theorised, something I shall turn to now.

5.2. Effects on Decision-making

Since empowerment entails both the power to make decisions and the power within, or the *sense* of agency, this section will address the former in relation to answering research question 2: How might paid work in the garment industry affect women’s decision-making within the household? Decision-making among the informants encompasses a range of aspects from household purchases, overtime work, and child care. Despite the economic contribution that all women provide to their households, decision-making power appears to not be very high, and the types of decisions have not changed very much according to the majority of informants.

The married women revealed that they decide over small household purchases. These are teff - a staple grain in Ethiopia that is used to make injera, a sour, spongy flatbread -, kitchen utensils, charcoal, cooking oil, and vegetables. They explained that the reason for the latter was because their husband would waste money in one of the small shops, buying worse vegetables than those that are available in the big market. This suggests the deep-rootedness of intra-household gender roles and norms. If the woman was married, it was almost always the man who decided over larger household purchases like rent, more expensive foods like pasta, and when and for whom to buy clothes. Interestingly, almost all married women in the individual interviews *said* they decide over larger household purchases *jointly* with their husbands. The same was true for other types of decisions such as when to have sex. However, the pile-sorting activity in the FGDs elicited richer narrative explanations that it was in fact the husband who decided over this and larger purchases (see appendix D). Women would still try to negotiate for their preference, but they would give in

if the husband still insisted. This demonstrates that despite these women earning an income from paid work in the garment industry, and sometimes even earning more than their husbands, their actual decision-making within the household is minimal. This suggests that norms play a large role in perpetuating the already very gendered allocation of intra-household decisions and hence constrain the potential for making decisions with transformational significance. This is pointed to by Kabeer (1999a:461) who argues that empowerment must involve decisions that do not “merely express and reproduce [gender] inequalities.”

Some women stated that working overtime was their own choice because their husbands did not really care. This, however, can be problematised. Firstly, overtime work is sometimes a choice forced upon the worker on behalf of the factory when there are big production orders. Secondly, those who said “their husband would understand” were married with men who they reported to be either unemployed or in flexible, informal work. Even in these cases where the wife technically has relatively high decision-making power, gained from her important economic contribution to the family, they would first consult their husband who would give his permission. In the two husband interviews, both men expressed they did not like it when their wife worked overtime because it is dangerous when it gets dark outside and hyenas are on the prowl. The women married to these men perceived this as a sign of affection from their husbands, but it was implied in the husband interviews that the dislike stemmed from distrust of their wives being exposed to other men after dark. This reveals that there are many interwoven components within the household that affect decision-making. It is not just the participation of paid work that affects decisions because there is a wealth of gendered institutions and norms that shape these decision-making processes. Hence, decision-making as applied to objective choice appears to not have changed very much as a consequence of working in the garment industry.

Even if most women said the income they earned from working in the factory was not enough to change actual decision-making, a few married women raised the fact that their husband no longer decided everything. Still, spending patterns are gender-allocated and so too are decisions related to time-use as revealed in the pile-sorting activity. Traditional gendered division of labour in the household is the same as before, except some women said their husbands ‘help’ them wash clothes on their one day off per week. This is an interesting word-choice rather than ‘share’ the household burden more equally.

One informant, Demitu referred to earlier, said that decision-making is done more jointly with her husband since she started working in the factory two and a half years ago. Nevertheless, Demitu's mother cares for her eight-month-old daughter in the rural part of Wollo in northeastern Ethiopia. Since it takes two days to travel to her mother, Demitu had not seen her baby daughter for three months and would have to wait seven months more until the next big holiday to see her next. This instance offers a glimpse into the agonising decisions some women must make of whether to provide for their child/family economically or care for them (Samman et al. 2016). In the absence of support networks, affordable day-care, parental availability and more, some women perceive no available choice than to leave their children with their parents or other relatives. This paradoxical effect of gaining more decision-making power in relation to their husbands, but less so in relation to raising their children points to the complex dynamics of decision-making once women enter paid work in the Ethiopian garment industry.

For those women who were living by themselves or with a sister or friend who was also working in the factory, intra-household decision-making power is less relevant to scrutinise. The reason is because many of the decisions were split equally or done by themselves. Their income was almost solely used to pay rent and buy food, which are not markers of empowering decisions unless they are also able to save. The three unmarried informants in FGD 4 agreed in a very matter-of-fact tone that they were not thinking about bigger purchases at this stage in their lives, although they would like to eventually buy a sofa and a tv: "Once we marry, the husband will decide when to buy these things, but it will be bought with our money as well" (Informant 4 in FGD 4).

In sum, absolute decision-making among most informants appears to not have changed much because of increased access to incomes from participating in work in the export-oriented garment industry. This suggests that gender norms are very strong in dictating time- and income-allocation, even when women participate in paid work. Most women I interviewed maintained their role as either dutiful wives or daughters. Nevertheless, Agarwal (1997) reminds us that the lack of fundamental changes in already very unequal decision-making processes and outcomes that are visible from the outside, does not mean that these women do not perceive themselves as making meaningful choices that they are in control over to some extent. This is what I will turn to next.

5.3. Experiences of Agency and Well-being

Agency and well-being, as experienced by the women themselves, is important to examine for a richer understanding of empowerment. Adding sensitivity to various social positions further adds to a nuanced analysis, which as seen below is relevant to the findings of this case study.

5.3.1. Sense of freedom and independence

When analysing my primary data, the concepts of freedom and independence emerged as relevant cross-cutting themes for almost all informants without children, and especially for those who had done domestic work before. Even if many women expressed strong dissatisfaction with the salary as not reflecting the amount of time and intensity they worked, many women appreciated the “freedom to go in and out of the house whenever.” This was the case for Tsehay, age 19 and unmarried, who said that before when she used to do domestic work, she was only allowed to leave the house a few days per year. Working for Shints, however, she has Sundays off and can go outside in the evenings too. When comparing to the time-use sheets that the women verbally filled out, none of the women actually did go out in the evenings, and Sundays were predominantly dedicated to household work apart from attending church. A few of the unmarried women, however, went to see friends for a few hours on Sundays. This highlights the importance of having a ‘sense’ of agency that is relational and subjective to the person’s contextual evaluation, even if the women sometimes did not act on this ‘sense’.

Several informants complained about not being allowed in to the factory grounds if they were one minute late, and their movement was very restricted in the actual factory. They were only allowed to go the toilet once per day, and the women working on the sewing machines were forced to sit all day even if there was no work to do. Given this strict level of control, the ‘independence’ and ‘freedom’ associated with working in the garment industry might at first appear ironic and illusionary, but it makes sense given that the women compare to even worse systems of control that they were under previously. Another paradoxical finding was that coercion to work overtime was considered negative by some women because they were afraid of walking home from work after dark¹², whereas the option to do overtime work to make more money was also considered one of the benefits. This finding supports Agarwal’s (1997) finding that just because women do not revolt

¹² Three informants stated they had been harassed and robbed of their mobile phones while walking home from an overtime shift at night. Some informants knew women who had been raped.

against the gendered institutions that surround them, it does not mean they are not aware of them. Instead, they can feel a sense of agency from other avenues, such as saving money in secret. Two women from the individual interviews reported doing this.

Many informants spoke of creating friendships in the factory as a benefit from pursuing work in the garment industry. They were able to talk to women from different parts of Ethiopia, facing similar challenges. Two women reported they were able to pay for their evening school education, something they would not otherwise have been able to do were it not for this paid work.

Moreover, some jobs within the factory were seen as better for inducing a sense of freedom and independence. Sewing was repeatedly considered the best for “opening up a shop” in the future because it enabled better skills transfer compared to jobs in cutting for example. On the other hand, a few of the relatively more educated women were disappointed with the work. They thought they would do a more meaningful skills-oriented job in the factory that required reading and writing with their grade 10 education.

A few of the young, unmarried women said they were now able to buy “little things”, such as lotions and hair products, and they were no longer as dependent on their family. Moreover, having the ability to refuse sex from a boyfriend who wanted to marry early, or deciding whether to marry or not, because of paid work in the garment industry were mentioned by two women, age 21 and 22 respectively. The married women spoke much less about the sense of freedom and independence from working in the garment industry, if at all. Rather, paid work in the garment industry was a way to get by day by day and “not worry about tomorrow.”

5.3.2. Hardship, negative agency and time poverty

It was found that those women with children faced obvious negative agency of a double work burden. Frequent answers revolved around “not knowing where the money or time goes”. Married women were particularly vocal of the unfair work conditions, remuneration and division of labour at home. One informant, age 27, who had worked in the factory for three years explained that she would never get the chance to be promoted if she complained and expressed her grievance. The management would apparently always favour the Vietnamese floor managers who treated her very badly, “as if I am a nobody – do this; do that!” Despite being very unhappy and feeling submissive, she kept working in the factory and never complained. According to her, it was better to be patient, and live a healthy, simple life rather than risking it all by speaking out.

This same informant, called Aberash, emphasised that she did “not have *one* birr [Ethiopian dollar] in my account” - the same expression used by another married informant - and that she did everything by herself in the home because her husband “is a man who thinks like our fathers, the traditional type. He does nothing in the house.” Her frustration suggests a much higher level of vulnerability and hardship that is experienced compared to women who are unmarried and/or have no children. Moreover, Aberash was subject to violence from her husband every time she came home late from work, even if she did not know why. Upon answering what “doing well-feeling good” meant to her, she laughed embarrassed and said she had not figured out yet what that meant. Another married woman I interviewed said the same thing before explaining what she meant.

Abeba, age 26: I feel neither very happy or very sad. I am happy to not stay at home and that I am working at least...There might be something missing at home, some problems that must be fixed, but since I concentrate a lot at work, I forget all about it. Working here is less stressful.

While Abeba did not yet have any children¹³, her statement reveals that paid work in the garment industry has not had any drastic effects on her well-being. Rather, it is considered better than staying at home and worrying about not earning any money for herself or her household.

From the interviews, it is evident that it is especially married women and divorced women with children who face the “double burden”. They resort to wearing the same clothes for weeks to save time on washing, and they skip breakfast in the mornings because they are time poor. Those informants who had children reported spending up to eleven hours on unpaid work, including washing, cooking, baking injera, preparing coffee, and caring for their child(ren), on their day off. Unmarried women living with a sister or friend saved time by dividing the gendered household tasks between themselves. No women with children reported any leisure time to, for example, see friends, rest, and comb/ braid their hair, which were some of the activities mentioned by all eight informants who were unmarried and two out of four married women without children. It also stands in contrast to the time-use reported by the two husbands working in construction who recalled meeting friends outside of the home, napping, watching tv, and eating - versus preparing – food on their day off paid work. They did, however, report washing as one activity.

¹³ She was six months pregnant

5.3.3. Looking to the future

Some women reported they felt nothing about working day to day. They had lost hope and were indifferent thinking about the future, as expressed by the comment that arose repeatedly: “It is God’s will.” The economic necessity of just making it to the end of the month may explain why most women lack a sense of career. However, some were quite optimistic about the potential of opening a shop one day with the skills they had learnt in the factory. Other women were disappointed. Their expectations were unmet because they were confined to one monotonous task. They recognised this specialisation as pointless for the future because they did not know how to sew a piece of clothing from start to finish anyway. Another constraint to initiating their own business in the future was the limited possibility to save. Ten out of the 17 informants stated that they saved some of their income from working in the garment industry, but half of these were not on a regular basis and it was expressed in terms of buying medicines and saving for the holiday season, rather than for long-term plans.

6. Concluding Remarks

This qualitative case study is concerned with the exploration of the pursuit of paid work, its effects on intra-household decision-making, as well as experiences of agency and well-being. By exploring women's experiences from a variety of social positions, I was able to shed light on the complex realities and processes of women pursuing work in an export-oriented garment factory in Ethiopia. Many situations were interpreted differently by various informants, but what can be stated is that an overall increase in women's paid work in and of itself, will *not* automatically channel into greater agency and well-being.

The data analysed demonstrated that low education levels, or having 'failed' as emphasised by the women themselves is a reason for why women started working in the garment industry. Further probing in light of Ethiopia's specificities, however, suggested that gendered institutions have constrained girls from attending and doing well in school because of gendered obligations to do the burden of unpaid care work in the home. Pursuing work out of economic necessity was very prevalent in my findings, which counters the idea of paid work being an active choice. There appear to be no viable options for alternative work that is any better, and married women are especially constrained with regards to the type of jobs they can or cannot do. Overall, men played a noticeable influence on women's reasons for and ways of going about paid work in the garment industry.

Men continued to dominate decision-making, even if women many times made important economic contributions to their households. Although driven by economic necessity, the data also indicates that some women experienced a greater sense of freedom and independence once they started working in the garment-industry. This is mostly true for the unmarried women, and much of this 'sense' of agency and well-being appears to be relational to having done back-breaking and oppressive domestic work before. Married women, especially those with children, faced long work days when they came home too. None reported doing leisure activities, and those who experienced most hardship were those who were divorced with children or those who were married but with no support from other family members.

These empirical findings support feminist approaches to work as the most convincing explanations for why and how women pursue work; how it affects their decision-making and experiences of agency and well-being. There is a continuum of underlying reasons and processes. Given that feminist theories move away from individualising women to seeing their choices and experiences

in relation to other often-hidden and under-theorised contingencies and factors, feminist theories shed light on the nuances of what is happening on a more personal level in the lives of different women. Gendered structures of constraint and time-use, for example, are highly relevant factors to take into account for an in-depth understanding of how women are affected as they become increasingly incorporated into paid work of industrialising countries.

In effect, these findings suggest we need to ‘recognise’, ‘reduce’, and ‘redistribute’ women’s work as stated by Elson (2010). In other words, we cannot just assume women participate in paid work, and there are no consequences for who will do unpaid work. For many women, paid work has enabled them to meet their basic needs and put food on the table for their families, but it is questionable how durable these effects are if the unpaid work burden is not addressed by policymakers.

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Appendix A: List of Informants

Semi-Structured Interviews with Women Factory Floor Workers

Date	Informant	Garment job	Age	Origin community	Education (grade level)	Marital status	Household composition	Time at Shints	Place of Interview
26/01/2018	Beletu	sewing	26	rural	10	unmarried	older sister	3 months	Shints
26/01/2018	Abeba	sewing	21	rural	9	unmarried	older sister	1 year 9 months	Shints
26/01/2018	Konjit	sewing	20	rural	10	married	husband	2 years	Shints
26/01/2018	Yealem	sewing	23	rural	10	unmarried	alone	1 year 5 months	Shints
27/01/2018	Yeayenae	delivery	25	rural	7	married	husband	2 years	Shints
27/01/2018	Embet	delivery	23	rural	9	unmarried	alone	5 months	Shints
27/01/2018	Tiru	quality control	21	rural	10	unmarried	aunt & aunt's husband & their 2 children	1 year 4 months	Shints
29/01/2018	Tsehay	printing	19	rural	7	unmarried	older sister and her husband	1 year	Shints
06/02/2018	Abeba	sewing	26	urban	10	married	Husband	4 years	Shints
06/02/2018	Aberash	sewing	27	urban	7	married	husband & daughter (age 3)	3 years	Shints
06/02/2018	Chaltu	sewing	31	rural	6	divorced	cousin, his wife & their 3 children; her 2 daughters (age 11 & 3)	1 year 11 months	Shints
07/02/2018	Selam	sewing	23	peri-urban	3	married	husband & son (age 5)	2 years	Shints
07/02/2018	Demitu	sewing	21	rural	9	married	husband (daughter of 8 months lives with grandmother)	2 years 5 months	Shints
09/02/2018	Abebech	sewing	21	rural	10	unmarried	friend	1 year 5 months	Shints
09/02/2018	Berhane	drawing	25	rural	5	married	husband	almost 1 year	Shints
10/02/2018	Aster	sewing line leader	27	rural	10	unmarried	daughter (age 5)	3 years	Shints
25/02/2018	Birtukan	sewing	22	rural	3	unmarried	alone	6 months	At her home

External Key Informant Interviews

Date	Informant	Organisation	Position
15/01/2018	Rahel Ayele	CETU	Women Affair Department Head
16/01/2018	Haregewoin Asefa	EP*	Women's Economic Empowerment Advisor
24/01/2018	Kidist Chala	ILO	Chief Technical Advisor
30/01/2018	Dr. Tigabu Degu	EDRI	Research Fellow
28/02/2018	Dr. Girum Abebe	EDRI	Associated Researcher

*EP = Enterprise Partners

Factory Staff Key Informant Interviews

Date	Informant
29/01/2018	Human Resource Manager
29/01/2018	Nurse
10/2/2018	Labour Union Cashier

Husband Interviews

Date	Informant	Affiliation
25/02/2018	Abinet	Husband to Konjit
26/02/2018	Abel	Husband to Informant 5, FGD 2

Focus Group Discussions with Women Factory Floor Workers

Informant	Age	Marital status	Household composition
FGD 1, 8 Feb 2018 @ Shints			
1	26	unmarried	alone
2	27	widow	son
3	26	married	husband
4	28	married	husband
5	20	married	husband & daughter
6	25	married	husband & daughter
FGD 2, 9 Feb 2018 @ Shints			
1	28	divorced	parents & son
2	28	divorced	parents & 2 daughters
3	26	married	husband & son
4	28	divorced	sister & daughter
5	27	married	husband & daughter
6	23	married	husband, brother & son
FGD 3, 10 Feb 2018 @ Shints			
1	27	married	husband
2	27	married	husband
3	22	unmarried	sister
4	24	married	husband
FGD 4, 25 Feb 2018 @ local café			
1	22	married	husband & daughter
2	20	unmarried	2 friends
3	20	unmarried	2 friends
4	21	unmarried	2 friends

Appendix B: Guide for Individual Interviews

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us. My name is Linn Ternsjö. I am currently studying at University in Sweden, although I have lived in Addis Ababa for 6 months. I am interested in industrialisation, empowerment, the garment industry, and women's work in Ethiopia.

Liyu works with me and provides me with great support, as both research assistant and interpreter. She will help me throughout the time I have left in Ethiopia. (Liyu interprets and introduces herself).

You were invited to speak with us because you are a woman who works in the garment industry and it is important for me to hear your experiences and opinions. Therefore, some questions are more specific, while others are more general. I am interested in learning about your everyday life, at home, in the factory and in your community.

There is no right or wrong answer, and if you do not want to answer a question, just let us know. Your participation is very helpful, and you can also come back to a question later if you don't know the answer right away. I am simply looking for your opinions and viewpoints. I am also interviewing many other women so my findings will not only be based on your answers.

If you agree, I would like to record this conversation as it will be difficult for us to take notes of everything. The recording will be used confidentially, so it will only be us. I will not disclose your name in my final study.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Would you like to participate?

Oral consent: Yes No

Part I: Respondent characteristics outlining social position and context of the informant

Could you please tell me a bit about yourself?

- Probes:
 - Age/age when started to work
 - Religion
 - Place of birth
 - Urban/rural
 - Marital status
 - No. of children
 - Location and type of residence
 - Education
 - Training received at/outside work
 - Sign a contract before working here
 - Access to information (tv, radio...), cooking stove etc
 - Means of transportation to work

- Associated with any organizations or unions
- Characteristics of your head of household (gender, age, occupation, level of education...)
- Factory job
- Income

Part II: Semi-structured interview (start posing questions referring to Ethiopian women in general – then specific)

1. Gender Roles and Norms in family and at work

1.1. How important is the contribution of women versus men workers in the garment industry to the life situation of their household?

- Probes: (Please describe any contributions you have noticed related to:)
 - Economic contribution?
 - Influence on production decisions?
 - Labour?
 - Child care?
 - Diet?

1.2. In your opinion, what traits or characteristics does it take to work in a particular job in the garment industry?

- Probes:
 - What is expected from women to fulfill requirements to work here?
 - Could you tell us what garment industry jobs, if any, are particularly well suited for women? Why?
 - Could you tell us garment industry jobs, if any, are particularly well suited for men? Why?
 - Are you considering this? Why or why not?

2. Decision to Work and Empowerment

2.1. Why did you start working in the garment industry?

- Probes:
 - How was the decision made that you would take this job? Did anyone decide for you? If yes, who?
 - Where did you hear about this work?
 - What attracted you about the work?
 - What did your family and friends think about it?
 - What type of work, if any, did you do before this job? IF CHANGE IN ROLES: Why did you decide to change from your previous job?
 - What skills or experience did you think you would gain?

2.2. Please describe how you feel about the experience of working in the garment industry?

- Probes:
 - What do you like about the work? Why?
 - What do you not like about the work? Why?
 - Are there more opportunities available for you in the garment industry than where you were before?
 - What are the challenges of working in the garment industry?
 - What problems have you experienced working in the garment industry?
 - Have your experiences working here been different than imagined? How?
 - Would you ever go back home? Why/why not?

3. Effects on Decision-making and Agency

3.1. How do you spend the income you make? Do you share it with others?

- Probes:
 - Who in your family/household makes decisions on: when you or your child should go to the clinic? How to prepare and purchase food? Paying school fees? Buying clothes for yourself? Paying rent? Etc.
 - Is this different from before you started working in the garment industry? How?
 - IF RESPONDENT IS MARRIED: where does your husband's income go?

3.2. Do you save any money from the income you make in the garment industry?

- If yes, how much?
- Have you used the money you saved? If so, what for? If not, what do you want to use it for in the future?
- Do you have any debts?

3.3. Have you noticed any changes in household decision-making since you started working in the garment industry?

- Probes:
 - Does someone do household chores with you?
 - Have there been disagreements? Please describe.

Effects on Well-being

3.4. What does well-being/ doing well – feeling good mean to you?

3.5. How happy/satisfied are you about your life after you started working in the garment industry?

3.6. Are there any aspects of your life that you would like to see changed? If yes, please describe.

- Probes:
 - Are you considering another option?
 - What do you want for yourself in the future? In five years time? How about 10? (*try to note extent of certainty*)
 - Why do you want to be doing this?
 - How do you think you might achieve this? Is working here leading you to what you want to pursue in the future?

3.7. How has your life changed since you started working in the garment industry?

- Probes:
 - If yes, what has changed and why?
 - Considering all the benefits and difficulties of working in the garment industry, is your life better, same, or worse off than before you started working here, and why?

4. Time-Use

(Refer to Time-Use chart)

- From what you recall, how much time did you spend at home versus at work (or elsewhere) before you starting working in the garment industry? Did you have more leisure time before?

5. Closing

- Is there anything important you wish to share that we did not talk about in our conversation?
- Do you have any comments or questions?

Thank you so much. Should something be missing from our notes or something is unclear, would you mind giving us your phone number so we could call you to clarify?

Appendix C: Guide for Focus Group Discussions

Introduction almost identical to that of Individual Interview Guide shown in Appendix B.

Part I: Respondent characteristics outlining the social position and context of the informant (done standing up)

One by one, could you please tell me a bit about yourself?

Part II: Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. What garment industry jobs, if any, are particularly well suited for women versus men? Why?
2. Why do Ethiopian women start working in the garment industry?
 - Probes:
 - How is the decision made?
 - Where do they hear about the work?
 - What attracts them about the work?
 - What do their family and friends think about it?
 - Why do women decide to change from their previous jobs, if they had any?
 - What skills or experiences do they think they will gain?
2. What are the benefits of working in the garment industry? Like what? Why?
3. What are challenges of working in the garment industry? Like what? Why?
4. Pile sorting – time-use
 - *Organize group so everyone can see and participate. Set up pile headings, indicating men only, women only, and both men and women.*
 - *Ask participants to sort household duty cards based on “who” does the tasks and activities, thinking about workers in the garment industry.*
 - I have here a set of cards with different household tasks and activities on them. As I show each one of them, I want us to place them into one of three piles: men, women or both.
 - Why are these roles that way? How have things changed since you started working in the garment industry? Why? Do some tasks increase or decrease in terms of time? Reflecting on the time before you started working in the garment industry, did you/women you know have more leisure time then compared to now?
5. Imagine there is a young woman, called Tigeest from rural Ethiopia, and she has heard that she might be able to find work in a large garment factory. How would you describe the experience of working here to her if she asks you what it is like?
 - Probes:
 - Will you say she will get a better life here and that there will be more opportunities available for her in the garment industry than what she currently has?
 - If she considers staying in rural Ethiopia, what would you recommend to her?
 - If she asks about potential problems she might encounter, what will you say?

6. Pile Sorting - decisions

- *Gather up the cards with duties on them and ask participants to sort cards with household decisions on them based on “who” makes the decisions*
 - I have here a set of cards with different household duties on them. As I show each one of them, I want us to place them into one of three piles: men, women or both.
- *As cards are placed on the piles, ask the participants why that card should be in that particular pile. When sorting is complete, ask participants:*
 - Who makes the most decisions?
 - Would these piles be different in any way if these piles represented an unmarried man and woman – say a boyfriend and girlfriend?
 - Would the decisions be made differently?
 - Why are these duties that way? Do some decisions taken by women change since they start working in the garment industry? Why?

7. How do you feel about yourself, and do you think you feel differently because you started working in the garment industry?

8. What is it that changes in the lives of women once they start working in the garment industry?

- Probes: Do the following aspects affect whether things change in the lives of women once they start working here? If yes, in a positive or negative way? (gender; age/age when starting to work; place and type of residence; being from a rural or urban area; marital status; having children; ethnicity; religion; skill level and/or previous experience; education; specific job; long-term/short-term work)

9. Of all the things we have talked about, does a woman’s life improve, if at all, once she starts working in the garment industry?

Closing

13. Is there anything important you wish to share that we did not talk about in our conversation?

14. Do you have any comments or questions?

Thank you so much. Should something be missing from our notes or something is unclear, would you mind giving us your phone numbers so we could call you to clarify?

Appendix D: Photos from pile-sorting activity on decision-making

