

Challenges and Coping Strategies of Rural Girls to the New Industrial Working Culture: The Case of Female Workers in Hawassa Industrial Park

Dagim Dawit Gonsamo

¹ *Department of Sociology, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hawassa University, Ethiopia*
Corresponding Author: Dagim Dawit Gonsamo

Abstract: This study focuses on challenges and coping strategies of girls employed to culturally unfamiliar industrial working culture in Hawassa industrial park. Industrial Parks (IPs) have been and are key policy instruments in enhancing economic transformation by attracting investment, promoting technological learning, upgrading and innovation and generating stable and decent employment. As Industrial park created job opportunities for youths in nearby community, people from the nearby rural communities migrate in search of job in industrial parks. Majority of operation workers are girls from rural villages with minimal awareness to industrial/factory working culture. Hence, the study was aimed to explore challenges encountered and strategies employed by industrial park workers to cope with the new working industrial job settings. The study employed a cross-sectional descriptive design and both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were adopted to attain the research objective. The study randomly selected 150 female operation workers. In addition, human resource management departments of the park and the respective sheds were interviewed to explore their perspectives on the problem. As the study found, among the major challenges that workers encountered include, multi-cultural communication barriers, stress due to long working hours, sexual harassment, vulnerability to HIV/AIDs and sexual reproductive health problem, underdeveloped working culture, stress due to long working hours, low wage and limited social skills. The study finally concluded that since majority of the industrial park operation workers are girls from rural village who have limited knowledge about the newly emerging culture of industrial job in Hawassa industrial parks, they encounter different forms of psychological, socio-cultural and economic challenges and as a result employee different forms of coping strategies to cope with the new working environment.

Keywords: Industrial Park, Challenges, Coping Strategies, Working Culture, Rural Girls

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I. INTRODUCTION

Industrial Parks are the contemporary strategy for rapid industrialization in developing countries and it is considered as one of the major policy direction which can provide opportunities for investment, increase exports to earn foreign currency, pave job opportunities for young and poor people in a given country [1, 2]. The development of industrial parks is considered as an important vehicle for reviving the industrial sector [3] and it can play critical role in catalyzing economic growth, diversification, upgrading and competitiveness [4]. Industrial development is at the core of Ethiopia's structural transformation agenda. The vision is for Ethiopia to become a leader in manufacturing both in Africa and on a global scale. This industrialization boom will help sustain the rapid economic growth registered over the past 13 years and put the country on the path towards becoming a middle-income carbon-neutral nation by 2025[5, 6].

In order to sustain the growth momentum and further induce industrialization, the government of Ethiopia has introduced the ambitious Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP1 and 2) since 2010/11, in which the private sector has been considered as an engine of economic growth and transformation that primarily intends in reducing poverty and bringing structural transformation through building an economy with modern and productive agricultural and industrial sectors that would ultimately take the country to a middle-income status by 2025[7]. The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) (2015/16-2019/20) places special emphasis on the development of an export-oriented manufacturing industry in order to transform the structure of the economy so as to enable the country to achieve rapid and sustainable growth and meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, including SDG on Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure [5].

One of the positive impacts of establishment of Industrial Park is creation of employment opportunities. Hence, in spite of frequent allegations about foreign companies bringing their own labor force, in Ethiopia, a lot of international firms tend to employ local workers, except in management positions. According to the developer of Eastern Industrial Park (IEP), one of the former Industrial park in Ethiopia, 87 per cent of the permanent workforce in those firms was local. Based on an annual growth rate of at least 11 per cent in the forthcoming years, the industrial parks are expected to create 32,000 new jobs in manufacturing, mostly targeting younger Ethiopians [8]. In general, the Ethiopian textile and apparel sector has shown huge potential and grown to 51% over the last 5-6 years, with employment targets of up to 100,000 by 2020. The majority of employment will consist primarily of women [6]. A result of these development efforts is the recently inaugurated Hawassa Industrial Park (HIP) –the biggest eco-industrial Park in the country which opened in July 2016, has been described as the Ethiopian government’s “flagship” industrial park. To this end, establishment of Hawassa industrial parks has created employment opportunities for both skilled and semi-skilled and even unskilled sector of the society that reside in and around Hawassa city. Mostly, workers in Hawassa industrial park are from rural districts of Southern Ethiopia especially districts closer to Hawassa city. Hawassa Industrial Park (HIP) alone now hosts fifty manufacturing sheds that employ 25,000 workers and is expected to eventually grow to 60,000.

1.1. Employment of Women/Girls in Industrial Job

In general, in the Ethiopian economy, the proportion of women tends to be less in occupations that are deemed high-skilled. For instance, the proportion of men and women in skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery jobs is 52 percent and 28 percent, respectively, whereas the reverse is true in elementary occupations (27.4 percent men and 48.4 percent women). Similar trends exist in the manufacturing sector. 48.08 percent of women work as low-skill production workers whereas only 27.6 percent of men perform similar roles. Furthermore, the proportion of women that works as high-skilled production workers decreases as the tasks becomes more skill-intensive (35 percent in textiles and garments and 15 percent in chemical and pharmaceutical industries) [5]. As of March 2019, industrial parks created a total of 70,000 jobs, up by 42% from the previous year, and with 80 percent comprised of women employees. Hawassa Industrial Park has created the largest number of jobs (24,000), followed by Bole Lemi Industrial Park (16,000), and Eastern Industrial Park (13,000) [6].

Female workers who are employed in Industrial parks are mostly at the low-skill, with low-wage, dominated by young girls who are mostly uneducated and migrants from rural areas. Workers employed in Industrial parks are informed only about the work process, code of conduct, how to follow the production line mainly [5]. They are rarely informed about potential challenges in being socialized to the new industrial working culture and how to cope with associated challenges.

This created challenge for rural girls working in industrial parks and relatively little is known about possible challenges they can encounter in new industrial working culture in industrial parks and possible coping strategies that they can use to feet with the system.

Therefore, this study was aimed to explore challenges encountered and coping strategies employed by rural industrial park working girls to cope with the new working industrial job settings.

1.2. Challenges and Coping Strategies of Industrial Job

The industry’s evolution also potentially represents tens of thousands of new jobs, many for women who make up the majority of workers in the apparel industry worldwide. Jobs in apparel factories are likely to represent a first experience in formal employment for many female workers. In Ethiopian factories today, systems to ensure good working conditions, skills development, and opportunities for professional advancement are nascent. Building up these systems and ensuring that jobs provide opportunities for dignified work will be essential for female workers to fully benefit from and contribute to their new employment [9]. Female worker’s often have low levels of education and awareness of their rights, precarious living conditions, and potentially low status in society and in the household. They also often hold the lowest paying, lowest status jobs such as line workers in factories and general workers on farms, with few paths to professional growth [9].

Low wages that barely cover the basic costs of housing, food and clothing is one of the key constraints that women and men workers face. Given gender pay gaps, the lower educational level of women, and limited career growth options, the impact of low wages and lack of safe and affordable housing is more critical for women. This challenge poses another gender-based constraint for women: women tend to co-habit with male partners, enter into non-formal relationships, which expose them to unwanted pregnancies, various STDs and HIV/AIDS, which become further barriers to their economic advancement [5].

According to Blyton et al [10], workers in alienating work environment adopt five strategies to cope up with challenges of the work environment which includes *making out, fiddling, joking, sabotaging and escaping*. Joking strategy is where employees create relationships among themselves and their superiors that allow for a combination of friendliness and antagonism and is a form of safety valve as it allows an individual to let off

steam. Sabotage is the deliberate destruction of the product or the machinery used to produce it. Downtime of machinery enables employees to have free time or free days from work in which they can engage into intra-prenurial activities as machines are worked on. Escaping is physical through absenteeism and labour turnover or mental escape which does not necessarily present a problem for management. In leaving the job, employees search for greener pastures elsewhere whilst through absenteeism employees might involve themselves in part time jobs that might hinder them from reporting work for some hours, day, days or even weeks [10].

1.3. Scope and Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to explore challenges and coping strategies adopted by rural girls in newly emerging industrial job with particular emphasis in Hawassa industrial Park. More specifically, the study is aimed to:

- Assess the working condition of rural girls in Hawassa Industrial Park
- Identify challenges encountered by rural girls in industrial/factory job
- Explore coping strategies adopted by rural girls to manage challenges of industrial job

1.4. Research Question

This study attempts to answer the following research question

- What looks like the working condition of female workers in Hawassa Industrial Park?
- What challenge do rural girls encounter while working in industrial job at Hawassa industrial Park?
- What coping strategies do rural girls adopt to cope with challenges of industrial job?

1.5. Significances of the study

Industrial Park is a recent phenomenon in Hawassa city and majority of workers especially operators in this park are mostly rural girl who are new to the emerging factory/industrial job in Hawassa Industrial Park. On the other hand, little is known and documented about the working condition of female workers and challenges and coping strategies they have encountered. To this end, this study will contribute in documenting challenges and coping strategies of rural girls who are currently working in Hawassa industrial park; a work setting which is unfamiliar to rural girls.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Background of the study Area

The city of Hawassa—the location of Hawassa Industrial Park(HIP)—is a regional capital of close to 450,000 residents, located 275 km from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Located on the shore of Lake Hawassa, the city lies on the Trans-African Highway, which stretches from Cairo to Cape Town. Hawassa, with a population of close to 5 million within a 50-km radius, lies in one of the most densely populated regions of Ethiopia. Hawassa's direct access to the highway linking Addis Ababa with Moyale in Kenya, underscores its potential as a regional trade hub for the East African Community [8].

Hawassa industrial park was inaugurated in June 2016 GC. It was developed and supported by the Ethiopian federal government specialized in textile and garment production. Its full operation kicked off in February 2017, and now it has been 16 months ever since. Hawassa Industrial Park (HIP), a nation-level textile and garment industrial park in Ethiopia, is characterized by "Nine Months Completed" and "Zero Emission Commitment". It represents the highest level of African textile industrial park in the perspectives of speed of construction, size and planning standards. The combination of these recent developments makes Hawassa an important political and economic center in Ethiopia.HIP is currently Africa's largest textile and garment industrial park [8].

The Hawassa Industrial Park is a makeover of the garment industry hosting popular apparel companies like PVH (home to famous brands such as Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, H&M, JC Pen, etc). The park is praised for its structural elements including well-ventilated sheds, paved roads (17 miles), and the treatment plan that recycles 90% of the water [9, 11].The park is developed under the national Industrial Park Development Corporation (IPDC) covering a total area of 300 hectare; the current developed area is 1.4 million M².The number of employees (as of this research) is 12,600 of which 10,000 works as machinery operators [9, 11].

2.2. Research Design

This study mainly employed a cross-sectional descriptive design in which both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were adopted to attain the research objective. With the objective to identify major challenges encountered by rural girls, the study adopted a survey design in which 150 respondents were randomly selected to be included in the study. Thus, the study randomly selected five currently operating company in the park, from which 30 respondents were selected from each company. Regarding the sampling techniques, taking the accessibility and willingness of the workers to respond to this study into account, convenience sampling method was used to draw the sampling units which is a widely used sampling technique

and applied especially when the target population is a group of female garment workers who are highly restricted by the companies [12].

In order to conduct a survey, self administered questionnaires which were translated in to commonly spoken local language in Hawassa industrial park (*Amharic and Sidama*) were distributed for respondents.

Moreover, in order to obtain opinions, reflection and assumption of human resources management personnel and production line supervisor, different interview sessions were conducted. Moreover, observations were also conducted to see the interaction of workers with each other and their supervisors.

After data were collected from all respondents, data obtained from quantitative questionnaire were checked and cleared to avoid errors prior to data entry and analysis. After this, data were entered in to computer software i.e. Statistical Package for Social Science for Window version twenty (SPSS 20.0 Statistics Software) for further analysis in which basic statistical operation such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were computed.

On the other hand, data obtained from key informant and observation were analyzed using a thematic analysis technique in which open ended questions on survey questionnaire and words of the respondent were analyzed qualitatively. Besides, human resource management departments of the park and the respective company were interviewed to explore their perspectives on the issues under investigation.

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect information on challenges and coping strategies adopted by female workers to manage the challenges of working condition of industrial job in Hawassa industrial Park.

Responses to all the statements in the questionnaire were measured on a five- point likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 with “1” indicating “*Strongly Disagree*”, 2 refers to “*Disagree*”, 3 refers to “*Not Decided/Nutral*”, 4 refers to “*Agree*” and 5 refers to “*Strongly Agree*” and the collected data were statistically processed subsequently to get the useful information.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the paper deals with major findings obtained from 150 respondents who participated in the study. This part of the research is grouped in to three categories in which the first part of the section deals with demographic characteristics of the respondents, where as the second part deals with major challenges that female workers encountered and the third part deals with coping strategies adopted by rural female workers in order to cope with the challenges they encountered in the new industrial work settings.

3.1. Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

In this section, the study reports basic demographic characteristics of the respondents including Age, Education Level of the Respondents, Year of Services in the company, Place of Origin, Monthly Income, and Company Profile.

3.1.1. Age of the Respondents

TABLE: 1: AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.No	Age Group	Frequency	Percent
1	18-24	55	36.7
2	25-35	89	59.3
3	36-45	6	4.0
	Total	150	100.0

As the TABLE 1 above illustrates, from the total (N=150) respondents who involved in the study, 59.3 % (N=89) were between the age group of 25-35, where as 36.7 % (N=55) were between the age group of 18-24 and finally the least number of respondents were those who were between the age group of 36-45.

As it are clear different policy directives of the country[7]the major objectives of establishment of industrial park is creating job for young people which is also indicated in the study that majority of respondents involved in the study as shown in the TABLE are young workers.

3.1.2. Education Level of the Respondents

The Fig. below illustrates educational level of the study participants.

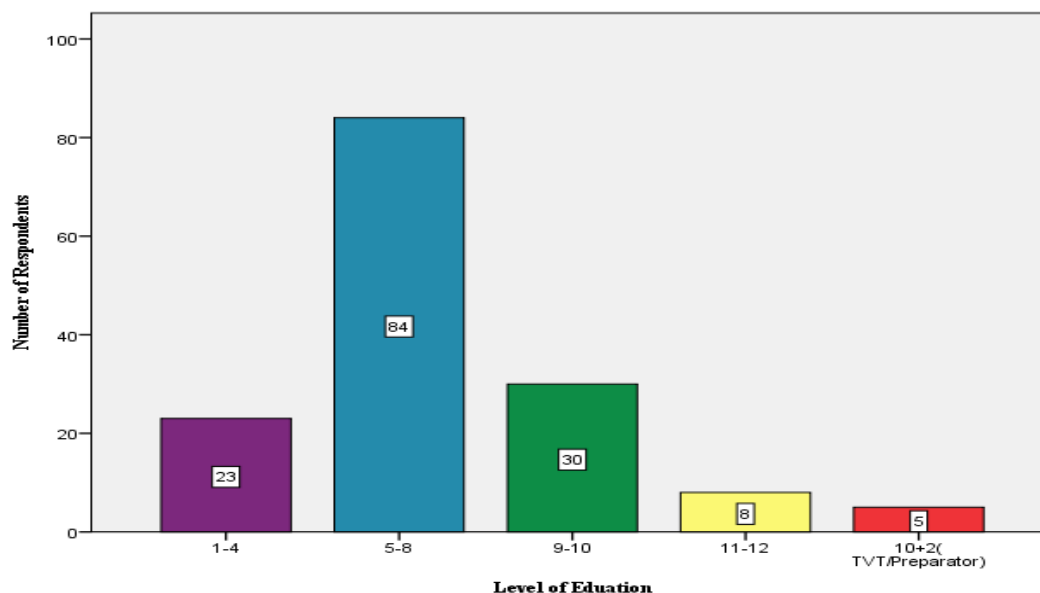


Figure 1: Education Level of the Respondent

The Fig. 1 above shows the level of education of the respondents. As it is illustrated in the Fig, N=84 respondents were those who attained grade 5-8, N=30 respondents were those who attained grade 9-10, N=23 respondents were those who attained grade 1-4, N=8 respondents were those who attained grade 11-12 and finally, N=5 respondents were those who attained 10+2(TVT/Preparatory) education.

Since industrial park establishment is aimed in creating employment opportunities for workers both at lower, middle and top level professionals, this study also found that operation workers are from the lower education grade with lower skill trainings.

3.1.3. Place of Origin of the Respondents

TABLE 2: Place of Origin of the respondents

S.No	Place of Origin	Frequency	Percent
1	Rural Village	96	64.0
2	Small Town/Rural Town	32	21.3
3	Capital City/Hawassa	9	6.0
4	Hawassa Surrounding Villages	13	8.7
	Total	150	100.0

One of the study objectives is to explore challenges that rural girls encountered when they work in environment which is new and unfamiliar for respondents who come from rural districts. To this end, one of the major variable which was considered in the study were place of origin of the respondents in which the study asked respondents on their place of origin before joining the Industrial Park(IP). Based on this, as indicated in the TABLE above, 96(64%) of the respondents were those who come from rural villages/kebele, were as 32(21.2%) of the respondents are those who come from small town/rural town and the other category of respondents 9 (6 %) are those from Hawassa city and the remaining 13(8.7%) of the respondents are from villages surrounding Hawassa city.

3.1.4. Marital Status of the Respondents

TABLE 3: Marital Status of the Respondents

S.No	Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
1	Married	19	12.7
2	Single	122	81.3
3	Divorced	7	4.7
4	Widowed	2	1.3
	Total	150	100.0

TABLE 3 above shows the marital status of the respondents in which 81.3(N=122) respondents were single followed by 12.7(N=19) who are married where as 4.7(N=7) and 1.3 % (N=2) are respondents are those divorced and widowed respectively. This TABLE also indicates that majority of respondents as indicated in TABLE 1 above are single young girls.

3.1.5. Monthly Income of the Respondents

TABLE 4 below indicates the monthly wage of the respondents show average monthly income.

TABLE 4: Average Monthly Income of the Respondents

Average Monthly Income	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	150	750	1200	815.00	120.506

As the TABLE 4 above indicates, the monthly average income of the respondents is 815.00 Birr (Approximately \$28) in which minimum wage is 750 and Maximum wage is 1200. According to Selamawit [11], though Hawassa Industrial Park (HIP) looks rosy on the outside, it has a different story on close inspection. The wage the workers are paid is poverty wage. The international poverty line is \$1.9 a day, about \$57a month. However, operation workers in HIP are paid less than a dollar a day (about 750 birr a month= \$27). To put this in global perspective, the average monthly salary of garment workers in Sri Lanka is \$66, \$136-\$175 in Vietnam, \$78-\$136 in India and \$170 in Cambodia.

3.1.6. Company Profile and Distribution of the Respondents

Table 5: Distribution of respondents with their company

S.No	Name of Company	Frequency of Respondents in Work Line				Total
		Cutting	Sewing	Finishing	Packaging	
1	PVH Corp	7	9	7	7	30
2	TAL Apparel	7	9	7	7	30
3	Epic Apparel	7	9	7	7	30
4	Indochina Apparel	7	9	7	7	30
5	Quadrant	7	9	7	7	30
	Total	35	45	35	35	150

In this study, from 21 currently operational companies in the park which are engaged in manufacturing and exporting of different garments, respondents in this study were randomly selected from five companies currently operating at Hawassa Industrial Park. The TABLE above illustrates number of respondents and their work line from which respondents were selected for this study. Respondents in this study were taken from five companies and they were drawn from four working line such as cutting, Sewing, Finishing and Packing.

3.2. Challenges Faced by Female Workers in Hawassa Industrial Park

This section of the paper reports major challenges that female workers encountered in their working experiences in Hawassa industrial park. The study asked respondents on possible challenge that workers encountered in newly emerging industrial work setting. To this end, possible challenges that rural girls faced were grouped in to three major themes (categories) which includes; “*Challenges related to the nature of factory job*”, “*Challenges related to cultural differences and communication barriers*” and “*Challenges related to the inadequate wage and compensation*”. Based on this, respondents reported on challenges they encountered were measured along with five point likert scale items and the following section presents response obtained from 150 respondents on challenges encountered by study participants.

Workers’ experience of new working environment, management systems, and relationships with management all impact the quality of their work, as well as their motivation to contribute to the workplace. To this end, workers in Hawassa industrial park encountered various challenges as mentioned by study respondents. The followings are some of the challenges that workers encountered due to working on environment which is unfamiliar to workers.

3.2.1. Challenges Related to the Nature of Industrial/Factory Job

One of the research questions of this study was related with challenges encountered by rural girls who are related with the working culture of the factory. In order to see this, the study asked respondent if they encountered challenges which are related with the factory working cultures itself. The TABLE 5 below illustrates responses obtained from the respondents which indicate what type of challenges they encountered working in the company. The factory working culture is unique which has its own procedures and the research assumed that worker can face challenges because of the working culture of the factory.

On the base of this, 150 rural girls who are working in different company in Hawassa Industrial park were asked about their experiences regarding the factory working culture and their response to the work environment that they were never been working.

The TABLE 5 below indicates challenges related to the working nature of the factory job that rural girls working in Hawassa Industrial Park have encountered.

TABLE 5: Descriptive statistics of challenges related with nature of Industrial/Factory Job

S.No	Items on Work Nature Related challenges	N	Mean	Std. D
1	Because of work stress I could not get time for my self	150	4.36	.830
2	I usually feel tired when I came to work b/c I walk long distance	150	4.19	.862
3	Due to work stress could not get time for family	150	4.17	.823
4	The noise in the work place is disturbing	150	4.07	.748
5	Working for long hours is a big challenges for me	150	4.07	.902
6	Working in this company is full of challenges	150	4.02	.709
7	My absence cause lose	150	3.75	.882
8	Sometimes I came late b/c I could adopt time	150	3.49	.841
9	I feel I can contribute input	150	2.99	1.173
10	The job I am doing is what I expected	150	2.52	.939
11	The company understand if I am late due to serious problem	150	2.51	.968
12	I feel I am connected to the company	150	2.47	1.060
13	I can get rest while working	150	2.35	1.056

The TABLE 5 above shows descriptive statistics of challenges faced by rural girls who are related to the nature of the work as measured with 13 items. As indicated in the TABLE, from the total N=150 respondents, highest mean score was recorded in response that “*Due work stress I could not give time for myself*”, (M=4.36, SD = 0.830) followed with “*I usually feel tired when I came to work b/c I walk long distance*” (M=4.19, SD=0.62) and “*Due to work stress I could not get time for family*” (M= 4.17, SD= 0.823). These statistics indicates that majority of the respondents “*Agree*” that working in industrial park is challenging for workers since it does not give time for them and time with their family. Besides, most respondents mentioned that walking long distance to work is one of the major challenges as it makes them feel tired when they come to work. Moreover, the other nature of factory work is the noise made by the factory. In this regard, respondents were asked if the noisy working setting is challenge for them. As the TABLE 5 above indicates, more than average respondents replied that noise made from the factory is one of the challenges that workers encountered (M= 4.07, SD = 0.748). Beside, respondents also mentioned that *working for longer house is a big challenges* that they have encountered and unable to easily adopt with (M=4.07, SD = 0.902).

These statistics on different form of challenges related with working nature of the factory itself indicates that more than the average respondents “*Agree*” that the factory working setting itself created challenges for rural girls since it is new working setting which they are not familiar in earlier times.

Moreover, to see the response on the nature of factory work, respondents were also asked if they have feeling that they can contribute input for the company (M= 2.99, SD=1.173); *If they feels that the job they are doing is what they expected*” (M= 2.52, SD =0.939); *If they feel that the company they are working can understand if they come late sometimes due to serious problem*(M= 2.51, SD= 0.968); *If they I feel connected to the company*(M=2.47, SD=1.060) and “*If they can get rest while working*” (M= 2.35, SD= 1.056).

Hence, as the response for these five items as indicated on the TABLE 5 above indicates, the mean score for all questions are lowest which indicates the response for these questions are closed to the response option of “*Disagree*” in the Likert scale. From these statements, it is visible that work nature related challenges that workers encountered is their inability to feel they can contribute, being disconnected from the company, inability of the company to consider personal problems, inability of workers to get rest while working and finally created feeling within workers that the job they are involved is not what they expected before.

3.2.2. Challenges Related to Culture Differences and Communication Barriers

The second they of challenges in this research is related to culture differences and communication barriers that workers encountered while working in the factory setting which is unfamiliar to them. The TABLE 6 below indicates response obtained from 150 respondents on possible challenges related with culture differences and communication barriers. Since girls from rural community are joining a work environment in which people from different culture to together both local people and foreigners. It was based on the assumption

that diversity among workers might create challenge in the work place among workers. The responses obtained from respondents are summarized in the TABLE below.

TABLE 6: Descriptive Statistics of Challenges Related to Communication and Culture

S.No	Items on Challenges of Communication and Cultural Differences	N	Mean	Std. D
1	I faced communication barrier with foreigners	150	4.23	.523
2	Language difference is challenges for me	150	4.17	.649
3	Working with people from other culture is challenging	150	4.13	.708
4	My Supervisor always focused on job not me	150	4.05	.560
5	I feel freedom to ask people around me if I got trouble	150	3.81	.988
6	It is easy for me to work in team	150	3.77	1.130
7	I feel easy to communicate with my co-workers	150	3.09	1.172
8	I feel easy to communicate with my supervisor	150	2.79	1.172

As the TABLE 6 above indicates, the study asked respondents if they encountered challenges related with culture difference and communication barriers on their daily routines and as the descriptive statistics on the TABLE 6 above indicates, the highest mean score on 8 items on challenges related to culture and communication is recorded with the response “I faced communication barriers with foreigner”, (M= 4.23, SD = 0.523) followed by “Language difference is challenges for me”, (M = 4.17, SD = 0.649), “Working with people from other culture is challenging”, (M= 4.13, SD = 0.708) and “My supervisor always focused on job not me”, (M= 4.05, SD = 0.560). The summary of these four items indicate that average respondents has encountered culture and communication related challenge while working in Hawassa industrial Park.

Moreover, the lowest mean score on culture and communication related items were recorded on items such as “I feel freedom to ask people around me if I got trouble, (M=3.18, SD=0.988), followed by “It is easy for me to work in team”, (M= 3.77, SD= 1.130), “I feel easy to communicate with my co-workers, (M=3.09, SD=1.172), and finally “I feel easy to communicate with my supervisor”, (M=2.79, SD=1.172).

These items on the other hand indicates gaps in communication and culture related issues among workers and supervisors while working in Hawassa industrial park and which is considered as one of the major challenge in this study.

In general, from these two scenario, the study finding indicate that rural girls working in the park encountered challenges related to communication with supervisor and their co-workers due to cultural difference and lower communication skill of workers. Besides, interview with some workers also revealed that that foreign manager is a source of linguistic and cultural tension and misunderstandings in the workplace. As one of the study finding [11] indicates, workers complain on mistreatment/aggressiveness of the expat managers. In response to the complaints, the managers often justify the low pay with either the inclusion of some benefits/extras such as monthly food allowance or low productivity with the promise that the wage would increase after productivity increases.

3.2.3. Challenges Related to Inadequate Wage and Compensations

The other challenges that rural girls encountered are related with inadequate wage and compensation that workers received while working in Hawassa industrial park. The following Fig summarizes descriptive statistic of response obtained from 150 rural girls from Hawassa industrial Park.

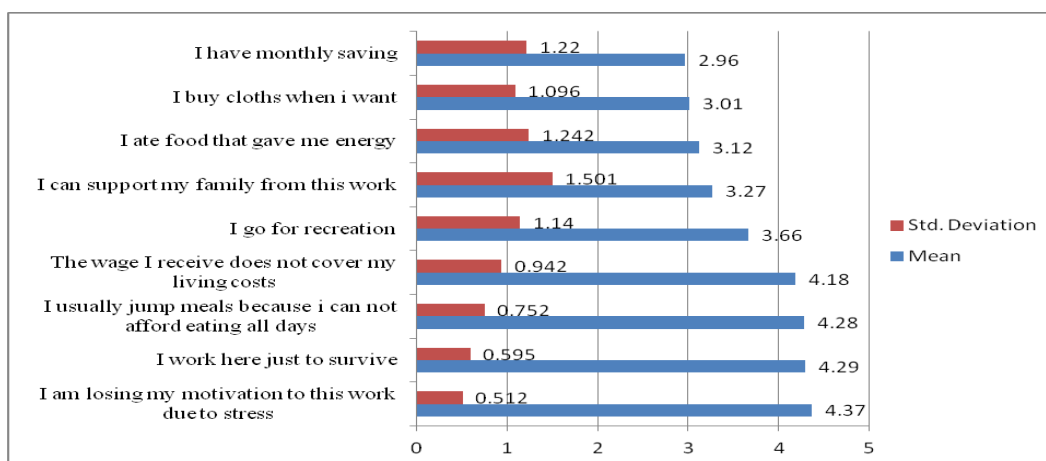


Figure 2: Descriptive Statistics of Challenges Related to Compensation and Accommodation

One of the study questions was to identify compensation and accommodation related challenges that workers encountered. One of the major challenges that workers in industrial park encountered is related with lower wage and compensation. The perception that workers have not received the wage opportunities promised to them makes low wages a persistent challenge and factor for declining motivation for workers which results in various problems such as absenteeism, and coming to work late [5].

Based on this, the study asked respondents on challenges related to compensation and accommodation that workers encountered. Hence, as Fig 2 above indicates from 9 items on challenges related with compensation and accommodation provided for workers, the highest mean score is observed in the response “*I am losing motivation for this work due to stress*” ($M=4.37$, $SD = 0.512$), followed by “*I work here just to survive*” ($M= 4.29$, $SD =0.595$), “*I usually jump meal because I cannot afford eating all days*” ($M=4.28$, $SD= 0.752$), “*The wage I received does not cover my living cost*” ($M=4.18$, $SD= 0.942$). These statements with highest mean score indicate that average respondents who were asked on challenges related to compensation and accommodation “*Agree*” that due to the reason that the wage they are receiving does not cover their living cost, they work in the park just for the sake of survival with the extent of jumping meals same times which resulted for losing their hope for working in the park,

On the other a hand, the lowest mean score are recorded on items such as “*Sometimes I go for recreation*” ($M=3.66$, $SD= 1.14$), “*I can support my family from this work*” ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.501$), “*I buy cloths when I want*” ($M=3.01$, $SD=1.096$) and “*I have monthly savings*” ($M=2.96$, $SD =1.22$). These statements with lowest mean score on items of challenges related with compensation and accommodation also indicates that average respondents are “*Not Sure/ Neutral/Undecided*” that they can support their family from their work, they ate food that gave them energy, and they buy cloths when they wanted which indicate that the lower wage they received restricted their ability to support family, buy cloth at time of need and purchase energy food. Moreover, respondents were also asked if they have monthly savings and average respondents “*Disagree*” they have monthly saving from their income.

According to [11], though Hawassa Industrial Park (HIP) looks attractive on the outside, it has a different story on close inspection. First, the wage the workers are paid is poverty wage. The international poverty line is \$1.9 a day, about \$57a month. However, operation workers in HIP are paid less than a dollar a day (about 750 birr a month= \$27). To put this in global perspective, the average monthly salary of garment workers in Sri Lanka is \$66, \$136-\$175 in Vietnam, \$78-\$136 in India and \$170 in Cambodia.

As the response obtained from respondent regarding one of the coping strategies on inadequate wage and compensation is that workers decided to live in a distant are where house with lower pay can be found. To this end the study finding by [11] also indicates that workers often live far from the park because they could not afford closer housing. This has forced them (particularly the night-shift workers) to walk for up to 30 minutes into the interior and pitch-black part of the city. This in turn has resulted in incidents such as rapes and psychological effects due to jeering and verbal abuse while walking the scary dark corners [11].

3.3. Coping Strategies of Workers towards Challenges of Industrial Work

The above section of this paper have dealt with challenges that rural girl have encountered while working on setting which is unfamiliar to these. As literatures [10] indicate, people usually respond towards challenges and work place stress in different forms.

To this end, one of the main research objectives of this study is to discover coping strategies adopted by workers to manage challenges of working in Hawassa Industrial Park (HIP). To this end, the study asked how respondent have been managing the challenges of unfamiliar working environment and related issue. To this end, this section on worker’s coping strategies deals with *coping strategies related to challenges of the nature of work, coping strategies of challenges related to wage and compensation and coping strategies of challenges related with culture differences and communication barriers.*

3.3.1. Coping Strategies Related to Challenges of Inadequate Wage and Compensations

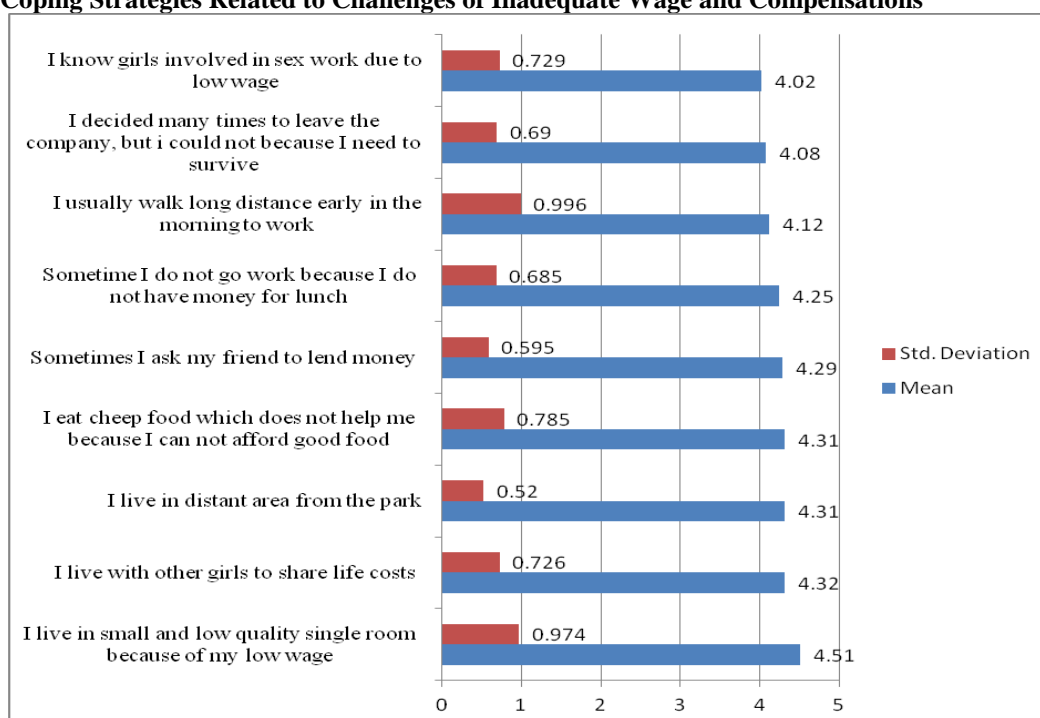


Figure 3: Worker’s coping strategies related to wage and compensation challenges

As illustrated in Fig.3 above, 9 items have been used to explore respondents coping strategies toward these challenges. As the Fig. 3 above indicates, the highest mean score regarding coping strategies employed by workers, average respondents agree that they *live in a small and low quality single room because they cannot afford due to their low wage*(M=4.51, SD 0.974). The second highest mean score (M=4.32, SD=0.726) was shown on the response of “*I live with other girls to share life cost*”, followed by “*I live in distant area from the park*”, (M=4.31, SD=0.52), “*I eat cheep food which does not help me because I cannot afford good food*” (M=4.31, SD=0.785).

The other items regarding the coping strategies as shown in the Fig 3, “*Sometimes I ask my friend to lend money*”, (M=4.29, SD=0.595). “*Sometimes I do not go work because I do not have money for lunch*”(M=4.25, SD= 0.685), “*I walk long distance early in the morning*” (M=4.12, SD= 0.996), “*I decided many time to leave the company but I could not because I need to survive*”, (M=4.08, SD= 0.69), and “*I know girls involved in sex work due to low wage*”,(M= 4.02, SD= 0.729).

Likewise, the above three statements on coping strategies indicates that more that the average respondents “*Agree*” that due to the challenges they encountered they decided to *live in group, live in far area from their work place, and consume cheep food to survive* with low wage they received. Supporting this, a study conducted on survival strategies among tea workers in Bangladesh among women who are considered as among the poorest and most deprived section of organized labour found that due to insufficiency of wage to cover their basic needs, women workers adopted survival strategies centered on food, housing, health, hygiene and financial solvency. As the study indicates, some decides to skipping meals and taking less preferred cheap food, women engaged in rearing of poultry, livestock and also engaging on additional part time jobs to fetch additional income [13]. Besides, due to the minimum wage some of workers are forced to rely on supplementary money from their families to sustain them in the month, to live in rooms of minimal facilities (e.g. bare, concrete rooms, four people sharing two thin mattresses on the floor). As a result, many workers do not see the job prospect as a long-term career opportunity [11].

3.3.2. Coping Strategies to Challenges Related of the Nature of Work

The second categories of worker’s coping strategies are those related to the nature of the work itself. To this end, Fig 4 bellow describes response obtained from N=150 respondents on their coping strategies to challenges related to the nature of industrial work.

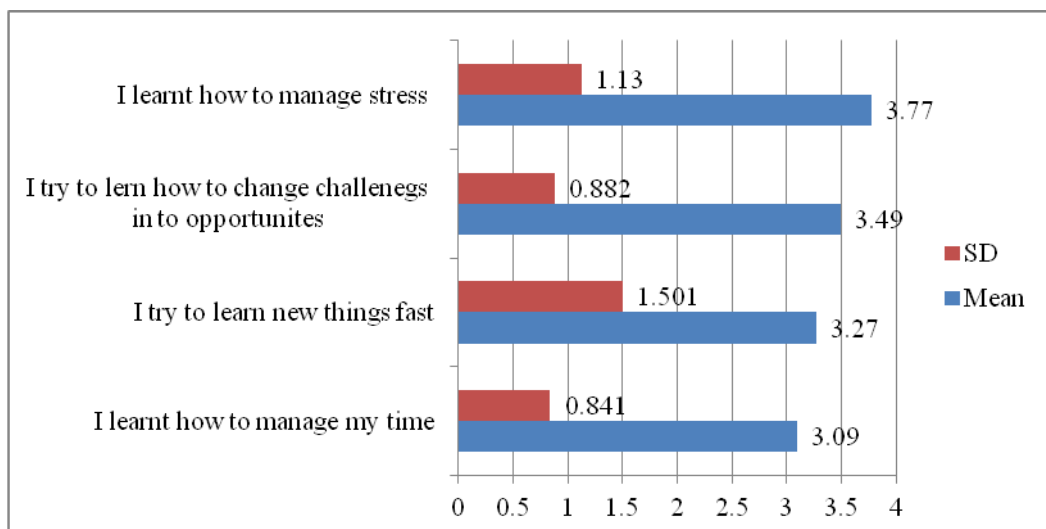


Figure 4: Coping strategies related with challenges of the nature of work

As the Fig. 4 above illustrates, the highest mean score from coping strategies of work nature related challenges is observed in the item “*I learnt how to manage stress*” (M=3.77, SD=1.13), followed by, “*I try to learn how to change challenges in to opportunites*” (M=3.49, SD=0.882), “*I try to learn new things fast*”, (M=3.27, SD=1.501), and “*I learnt how to manage my time*” (M= 3.09, SD= 0.841).

However, as the statements on coping strategies of work nature related challenges shows the mean score for all statement are lower and more closer to the response option of “*disagree*” which indicate that more than the average respondent’s opinion on these items are closer to the option of “*disagree*” which shows that respondents have lower knowledge and skills on how to manage work related stress such as lower knowledge on *how to manage work stress, how to change challenges in to opportunites, how to learn new things fast and how to manage time.*

1.1.1. Coping Strategies of Challenges Related to Culture Differences and Communication Barriers

The third categories of worker’s coping strategies are those related to the differences on culture and barriers on communication with co-workers and supervisors. To this end, the Fig below illustrates response obtained from N=150 study participants regarding coping strategies challenges of culture differences and communication barriers.

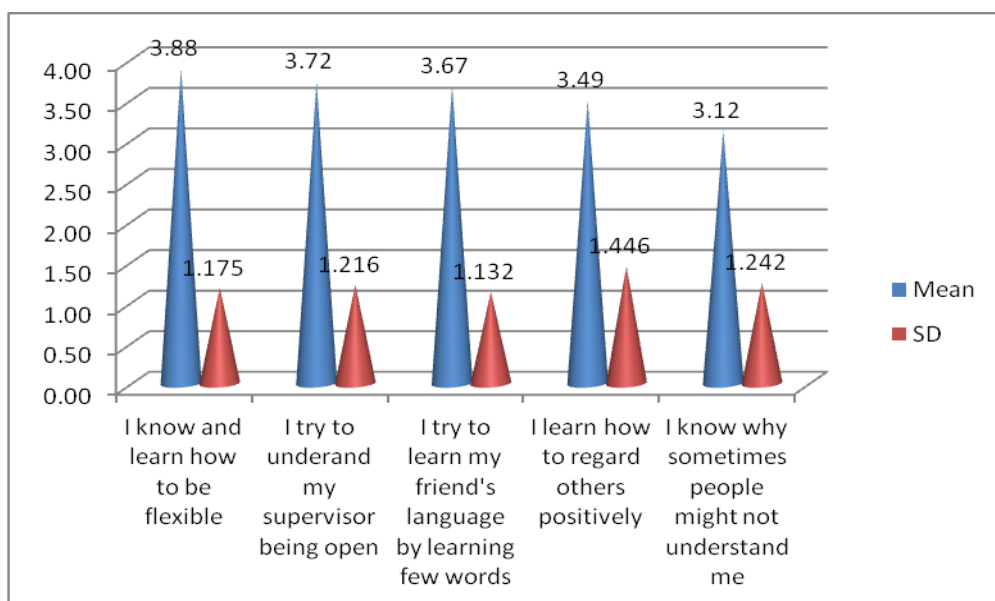


Figure 5: Coping strategies related with challenges of culture differences and communication barriers

As Fig 5 above indicates, from 150 respondents who were asked five questions on possible coping strategies related with culture differences and communication barriers, the highest mean score is recorded on item "I know and learn how to be flexible", (M= 3.88, SD=1.1175), followed with "I try to understand my supervisor", (M=3.72, SD=1.216), "I try to learn my friend's language by learning few words", (M=3.67, SD=1.132), and "I learn how to regard people positively", (M=3.49, SD=1.446). Finally, the response "I know why sometimes people might not understand me" is a response whose mean score is very close to "Not Decided" response option on five point Likert scale.

Likewise, the mean score for the above five items on coping strategies related with culture differences and communication barriers is lower which is more closer to the response option of "Undecided/Neutral" which refers to respondent's opinion on these items on coping strategies of culture differences and communication barriers are between "Agree" and "Disagree", except the first two items which are somehow closer to the response option of Agree (M=3.88 and M=3.72).

According to [10] workers in alienating work environment adopt five strategies to cope up with challenges of the work environment which includes *making out, fiddling, joking, sabotaging and escaping*. Joking strategy is where employees create relationships among themselves and their superiors that allow for a combination of friendliness and antagonism and is a form of safety valve as it allows an individual to let off steam. Sabotage is the deliberate destruction of the product or the machinery used to produce it. Downtime of machinery enables employees to have free time or free days from work in which they can engage into intra-preneurial activities as machines are worked on. Escaping is physical through absenteeism and labour turnover or mental escape which does not necessarily present a problem for management. In leaving the job, employees search for greener pastures elsewhere whilst through absenteeism employees might involve themselves in part time jobs that might hinder them from reporting work for some hours, day, days or even weeks [10] [14].

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The objective of this study was to identify challenges that rural girls encountered while working in new working environment of Hawassa industrial Park which is unfamiliar environment for most rural girls. To this end, the study was aimed to identify challenges and coping strategies employed by rural girls to cope with challenges of working condition. As the study discovered due to joining unfamiliar work setting where lower supervision is made and workers are expected to be actively engaged in their routine tasks, worker encounter different challenges. Hence, based on the findings, the study has concluded that rural girls who join unfamiliar working environment in Hawassa Industrial Park encountered challenges related with the *nature of the factory job, challenges related with culture differences and communication barriers and challenges related with inadequate wage and compensation*. To this end, workers adopt different forms of coping strategies so that they can cope up with the challenges they encountered.

Based on the findings obtained, the study has forwarded the following recommendation

- One of the major challenges that a girl encountered was HIP is inability to easily adapt to the work environment. To this end, the company management need to give enough attention to socialize newly employed girls to easily fit with the new working culture. Besides, in addition to orientation given during the employment, constant follow up should be made to support worker fit with the system easily.
- In order to address challenges related with barriers of intercultural communication, the human resource department of the industrial park should establish a mechanism by which workers can learn about the dynamic of work place diversity and its management techniques
- The other challenge is related with inadequate wage and other incentive benefits provided for workers which results for adoption of various coping strategies that girls adopt to cope up with the stress. Hence, reconsideration of the wage amount of the workers needs to be given prior attention. On the other hand, food and transport allowance which have been provided for workers in the form of incentives should be provided in kind rather than in cash since workers can benefit more from the allowances in kind than in cash as in most cases the allowance given in cash is not proportionate to the actual expenses incurred.
- Factories has to give a refresher training on soft skills once the workers are recruited on issues such as effective communication, work place stress management, time management, respect in the workplace, cooperation with other cultures etc.
- In order to address the cultural and language cultural and language training should be provided for foreigner on the local culture and languages to contribute to better understanding and to deal with the cultural differences.

- The study has found that due to lower wage and unfamiliar work environment, workers constantly feel to leave the company. To this end, in order to manage workers and reduce employee turnover, the park management should work toward identifying and addressing possible factors that reduce workers motivation to their work and made them decide to leave the company.

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**Photo: Female Operation Workers at One of the Company at Hawassa Industrial Park
Source: Study Data Collection**

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