

Experiências de Migração Ilegal de Retornados para o Distrito de Omo Nada, Zona Jimma, Estado Regional Nacional de Oromia, Sudoeste da Etiópia

The Illegal Migration Experiences of Returnees to Omo Nada District, Jimma Zone, Oromia National Regional State, South West Ethiopia

Las experiencias de migración ilegal de los retornados al distrito de Omo Nada, la zona de Jimma, el estado regional nacional de Oromia, el suroeste de Etiopía

Recebido: 30/05/2019 | Revisado: 05/06/2019 | Aceito: 04/08/2019 | Publicado: 22/08/2019

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Resumo

Apesar do fato de que as experiências de migração ilegal dos retornados são importantes para projetar programas efetivos para reintegrá-los à comunidade, há escassa informação para os retornados ao distrito de Omo Nada. O objetivo deste estudo é investigar o abuso e a exploração física, econômica e social enfrentados pelos retornados em trânsito e no local de destino. Para este fim, entrevistas em profundidade, entrevistas com informantes-chave e discussões em grupo foram realizadas para coletar dados qualitativos necessários para o estudo. Os dados foram transcritos e analisados por temas. Os resultados das descobertas mostraram que os migrantes estavam fisicamente exaustos no caminho com fome e sede, sujeitos a abusos físicos como insultos, espancamentos, tapa, chutes e queimaduras corporais dos contrabandistas. Lesões infligidas incluíam feridas corporais, membros quebrados e costelas. Além do abuso físico, os contrabandistas e traficantes roubavam e exploravam os migrantes economicamente, cobrando-os por serviços extras em diferentes pontos de trânsito. Isso, por sua vez, fez com que os migrantes terminassem em servidão por dívida. As mulheres ficaram sujeitas a abuso sexual por contrabandistas e empregadores. O abuso continuou no país de destino pelos próprios empregadores. A exploração econômica assumiu a forma de longas jornadas de trabalho com pouco descanso, cargas de trabalho difíceis, salários

reduzidos ou salários totalmente retidos. A punição foi particularmente dura para aqueles com pouca ou nenhuma habilidade. Além disso, a situação privou os participantes do estudo de obter alimentos suficientes ou saudáveis, e sua comunicação com as famílias deixadas no país de origem foi restrita. As mulheres, geralmente domésticas, foram vítimas de abuso sexual por empregadores e suas famílias.

Palavras-chave: migração ilegal; retornados; abuso, exploração Omo Nada

Abstract

Despite the fact that the illegal migration experiences of the returnees are important to design effective programs to reintegrate them into the community, there is scanty of information for the returnees to Omo Nada district. The purpose of this study is to investigate the physical, economic and social abuse and exploitation faced by the returnees en route and in the place of destination. To this end, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken to collect qualitative data required for the study. The data was transcribed and analyzed thematically. The results of the findings showed that the migrants were physically exhausted en route with hunger and thirst, subjected to physical abuse such as insults, beating, slapping, kicking, and bodily burn from the smugglers. Injuries inflicted included bodily wounds, broken limbs and ribs. In addition to the physical abuse, the smugglers and traffickers robbed, and exploited migrants economically charging them for extra services at different transit points. This in turn made the migrants ended in debt bondage. Women became subject to sexual abuse by smugglers and by employers. The abuse continued in the country of destination by employers themselves. Economic exploitation took the form of long working hours with little rest, difficult workloads, reduced pay or wages withheld altogether. Punishment was particularly harsh for those with few or no skills. In addition, the situation deprived the study participants from getting sufficient or healthy food and their communication with their families left behind in the home country was restricted. Women, usually domestic workers, had been subject to sexual abuse by employers and their families.

Key words: illegal migration; returnees; abuse, exploitation Omo Nada

Resumen

A pesar del hecho de que las experiencias de migración ilegal de los retornados son importantes para diseñar programas efectivos para reintegrarlos a la comunidad, existe poca información para los retornados al distrito de Omo Nada. El propósito de este estudio es

investigar el abuso físico, económico y social y la explotación que enfrentan los retornados en el camino y en el lugar de destino. Con este fin, se llevaron a cabo entrevistas en profundidad, entrevistas con informantes clave y grupos de discusión para recopilar datos cualitativos necesarios para el estudio. Los datos fueron transcritos y analizados temáticamente. Los resultados de los hallazgos mostraron que los migrantes estaban físicamente exhaustos en el camino con hambre y sed, sometidos a abusos físicos como insultos, golpes, bofetadas, patadas y quemaduras corporales por parte de los traficantes. Las lesiones infligidas incluyeron heridas corporales, extremidades y costillas rotas. Además del abuso físico, los traficantes y traficantes robaron y explotaron a los migrantes que les cobran económicamente por servicios adicionales en diferentes puntos de tránsito. Esto a su vez hizo que los migrantes terminaran en la servidumbre por deudas. Las mujeres fueron objeto de abuso sexual por parte de contrabandistas y empleadores. El abuso continuó en el país de destino por parte de los propios empleadores. La explotación económica tomó la forma de largas horas de trabajo con poco descanso, cargas de trabajo difíciles, salarios reducidos o salarios retenidos por completo. El castigo fue particularmente duro para aquellos con pocas o ninguna habilidad. Además, la situación privó a los participantes del estudio de obtener alimentos suficientes o saludables y se restringió su comunicación con sus familias que quedaron en el país de origen. Las mujeres, generalmente trabajadoras domésticas, habían sido objeto de abuso sexual por parte de los empleadores y sus familias.

Palabras clave: migración ilegal; retornados; abuso, explotación Omo Nada

1. Introduction

“Illegal migration”¹ (also known as irregular migration) refers to the entrance and residence of individual/s in another country without having or receiving legal authorization from the host state to do so (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2010). Illegal migration involves crossing of borders without complying with the requirements for legal entry into the receiving state. It takes place outside the norms and procedures established by states to manage the orderly flow of migrants into, through and out of their territories (International

¹While illegal migration is globally acknowledged to be a growing problem, estimating the numbers of people who are smuggled or trafficked every year is problematic. The covert and illegal nature of smuggling and trafficking makes both phenomena difficult to provide accurate estimates of their incidences (Native, McClain & Stacy 2010:243). Estimates are inconsistent and are likely to be gross underestimates.

Organization of Migration [IOM], 2003). The two major types of illegal migration are migrant smuggling and human trafficking. The smuggling of migrants and human trafficking have become widespread, their causes being deep-rooted in the socio-economic and political structures of societies (Human Smuggling and Trafficking Centre, 2006).

Many young Ethiopians transit illegally through Djibouti, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, or Kenya to the Middle East every year to seek work in the Middle East (US Department of State, 2015). A joint study conducted by the Danish Refugee Council and Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (2012) revealed that Ethiopian irregular migrants represented over 75% of all maritime arrivals in Yemen in 2011. Over 75,000 Ethiopians arrived at Yemen's coast in 2011 of which about 56,000 of them entered Yemen to get to Saudi Arabia. The study also reported that over the past six and a half years, the cumulative number of new arrivals from Ethiopia was estimated to be at least 230,000 (Danish Refugee Council and the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, 2012).

Saudi Arabia receives the largest number of illegal migrants from the Horn of Africa in general, and from Ethiopia in particular. Over the last three years, between 100,000 and 200,000 Ethiopians migrated to Saudi Arabia annually through regular labour migration. Estimation indicated that the number of irregular Ethiopian migrants is double the size of the regular migrants (The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat 2014:9). Over 400,000 Ethiopians, including some trafficking victims, reside in Saudi Arabia (US Department of State, 2016).

A number of people leave their homes and families every year in search of economic opportunities that are not available to them in their home countries. They often make the decision to emigrate based on false information provided by smugglers and brokers regarding the lucrative employment opportunities and better pay abroad or destination countries (Jayagupta, 2009). The migrant, their families and relatives spend considerable amounts of money on illegal migration (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2011). They emigrate either by selling their families' scarce resources or by borrowing money from relatives to pay the smugglers and illegal brokers who promise to undertake the so-called facilitation activities to help them reach the place of destination safely and get decent employment with good pay.

Contrary to the promise of well paid jobs, however, many irregular emigrants are soon absorbed into the illicit world of people smuggling and trafficking which exposes them to conditions of ongoing exploitation and human misery (United Nations Office on Drugs and

Crimes United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes [UNODC], 2008). There is evidence that smugglers continue to exploit ‘illegal migrants’ through threats and demands for additional fees. Many illegally smuggled people also become vulnerable to trafficking syndicates due to their lack of legal status, knowledge and experiences of the foreign culture (Jayagupta, 2009).

Smugglers and traffickers subject the migrants to detention, extortion and severe abuse en route to their final destinations (US Department of State, 2015). In some cases, smugglers force migrant to work for years in the illegal labour market to pay off debts incurred because of their transportation. In countries of destination, migrants may become vulnerable to different forms of exploitations in a range of industries like agriculture, construction, domestic work, entertainment, forestry, fishing, mining and textiles (IOM, 2015). The abuse ranges from the imposition of excessive working hours with unfair pay to verbal and physical abuse to even sexual harassment and sexual attacks. Substandard working conditions and unfair contractual terms are imposed on them by middlemen and employers. Women are particularly vulnerable as the abusers rape and often force them to engage in prostitution (Calandrucio, 2005).

In addition to being subjected to unsafe conditions on the smuggling journey, smuggled aliens may be held under debt bondage by brokers and smugglers until their debt is paid off by the emigrants, family members or others (Human Smuggling and Trafficking and Centre 2006:1).

Ethiopia has been identified as a source, and to some extent a destination and transit country, for illegally smuggled or trafficked men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex exploitation (US Department of State, 2016). People are smuggled and trafficked through the country via three major routes in east, north and south (IOM, 2015).

Most of the illegal migrants from Ethiopia to other countries typically face exploitative conditions. The smugglers and traffickers force Ethiopian girls into domestic servitude and prostitution in countries such as Egypt, Somalia, Yemen, Djibouti, Sudan and South Sudan (particularly in Juba, Bor, and Bentiu). Similarly, they subject Ethiopian boys to forced labour in places such as Djibouti as shop assistants, errand boys, domestic workers, thieves, and street beggars (US Department of State 2012). Migrants are exposed to a range of health concerns including torture, domestic violence, alcoholism, psychological problems, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases in transit as well as destination countries (Muco, 2013; Enaikele & Olutayo 2011; Abdulraheem & Oladipo, 2010; UNODC, 2008; Bryant-Davis, Tillman, Marks & Smith,2010).

The various abuse and exploitation experienced by illegal migrants may vary from place to place and individuals to individuals. However, there is scanty of information with regards to the migrants from Omo Nada district to the Middle East. Therefore, what are the illegal migration experiences of the returnees to Omo Nada district? The general objective of this study is to investigate the illegal migration experiences of the returnees to Omo Nada District, Jimma Zone, Oromia Region, Ethiopia.

2. Research Methods

3.1 Study Group and Key Informants

The population for this study was the returnees of illegal migration from Saudi Arabia in 2013 to Omo Nada District. I applied the concept of data saturation and conducted 20 in-depth interviews with returnees of illegal migration. I used the purposive sampling technique to select 20 study participants from returnees deported by the Saudi Arabia and returned to Omo Nada in 2013. Of these, 16 (sixteen) were males and only 4 (four) were women. Men constitute the majority of the returnees to Omo Nada compared to women.

The District Labour and Social Affairs Office, which works closely with returnees of illegal migration, identified a number of returnees to Omo Nada District. I purposively selected and interviewed returnees who were voluntarily. In addition to their willingness to participate, other criteria used to select the participants were their age and time of their return. Due to the added vulnerability of child returnees, I selected only participants above the age of 18 to participate in the study. In terms of the time of return, as a large number of migrants officially returned to Ethiopia by Saudi Arabia in 2013, they were included in the study. This helped the researcher get many voluntary participants.

3.2 Methods of data collection

In-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were the qualitative research methods I used to undertake the study.

I interviewed twenty participants. The sample size of the study participants for the in-depth interviews was determined based on the concept of the data saturation point. The interviews lasted between 27 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. I used a digital voice recorder to record the interviews.

I also conducted five key informant interviews with one expert in each of the following offices: Omo Nada District Labour and Social Affairs Office, Youth's Affairs Office, Women

and Children's Affairs Office, Police Office and one non-government organization working on returnee reintegration. Finally, I conducted I conducted two focus group discussions (1 all -male and 1 all- female) discussions separately, which each consisted of 12 individuals. The participants of the focus group discussions were community leaders, religious leaders, elders, men and women. I selected the FGD participants based on the depth of their knowledge about the reintegration responses made for the returnees and the returnees' current reintegration situation.

3.3 Methods of data analysis

After the data was transcribed and coded, I used thematic analysis to analyze the data. I developed the themes based on the research objectives and repeated patterns of meanings in the data. Pseudonyms are used in order to keep the study participants' confidentiality wherever narrations are directly quoted.

3.4 Trustworthiness of the data

Morrow (2005) argues that one of the mechanisms to achieve credibility in qualitative study is prolonged engagement with the study participants. For this purpose, I spent five months in the field site. This helped me become familiar with my study participants and gain an understanding of their experiences and the contexts in which they lived.

The other technique suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is member checking. Member checking is a process whereby a report of specific descriptions is taken back to the participants to confirm its accuracy (Creswell, 2009). To ensure trustworthiness of the data in this regard, I went back to the study site after data collection and transcription to read the transcribed data to the study participants to validate the data.

Shenton (2003) advises that in order to address the dependability issue more directly, the researcher should report in detail the process of the study, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same result. To this end, I tried to document clearly and presented all the procedures I followed to carry out the study to ensure the dependability of the study. I hope that this can pave the way for the replication of the study by somebody else.

3. Findings and analysis

3.1 Introduction

There should be evidence to say that reintegration assistance is important for the returnees. To this end, the study explores the illegal migration experiences of the returnees explored in addition to the contextual factors that resulted in their illegal migration. For this reason, this chapter of the study tries to investigate the illegal migration experiences of the returnees that can be a ground for arguing the need for intervention and reintegration. The illegal migration experiences are described in terms of the various abuse and exploitation the study participants experienced in connection with their illegal migration.

The reintegration of the returnees is a complex phenomenon, which involves the understanding of each returnee's illegal migration experiences en route and in the place of destination. In addition to understanding the contextual factors that resulted in the illegal migration of returnees, it also requires an understanding of the subjective experiences with which they returned home. In other words, successful reintegration of the returnees also depends on understanding their experiences of the whole process of illegal migration because this contributes to the understanding of the support they need to reintegrate into their communities of origin effectively.

Lyneham (2014) argues that understanding these experiences has paramount importance and benefits for designing mechanisms to best serve the needs of the returnees to recover and decrease their likelihood of re-migrating illegally (Lyneham, 2014).

As the returnees' subjective experiences of illegal migration vary from individual to individual, their reintegration needs also vary. There is no one-size-fits-all reintegration response. Rather, the reintegration approaches depend on the local contexts and the returnees' needs to match the reality on ground (IOM, 2015). The failure to understand the subjective problems the majority faced, and their subsequent reintegration needs, leads to inability to tailor reintegration supports to their needs.

Regarding this, Cassarino (2009) contends that reintegration of the returnees depends on understanding three major factors: the situations in the home country to which the returnees are returned; their migration experiences while they were abroad; and the situations in the host and home country that motivated them to return home. These pre- and post- return conditions assessment are important to estimate the likely outcome of reintegration.

The reintegration efforts which neglect the subjective experiences of the returnees before migration, en route, and in the place of destination results in incomplete reintegration responses which in turn results in wastage of resources. For this reason, this chapter of the study explores and discusses the physical, emotional, economic and social experiences of the returnees en route and in the place of destination.

3.2 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is one of the most insidious problems ‘illegal migrants’ face en route to their places of destination. The long journey and the conditions under which they often travel are physically devastating for many migrants. Most of the returned ‘illegal migrants’ in the study area repeatedly mentioned the fact that they faced various types of severe physical abuse on their journey to Saudi Arabia. The experiences of Abdulbasit, Fatuma, Bilal, Abdushukur and Mamdason discussed below reveal the severity of the physical abuse experienced by the study participants due to the exhausting nature of the journey and maltreatment in the hand of the smugglers and traffickers.

We (my travelling mates and I) encountered various problems while we were on the way to our destination. The smugglers and traffickers forced us to travel in deserts far away from people because they fear that the security forces in different destination countries would prosecute them if caught. We faced a number of difficulties crossing the Sahara Desert. There were times we stayed for two to three days without getting a piece of bread and a drop of water. My mouth became totally dry due to lack of water and there was a time I was forced to drink human urine. My body was almost paralyzed due to lack of food, water and exhaustion related to the journey. In addition, the smugglers and traffickers were beating, slapping and kicking people whenever somebody became tired. They poured melted plastic on our heads to force us to pay them additional money they requested from us on the journey. Due to all these physical abuses, I became seriously sick. Some people even died due to lack of water, food and the physical abuse by the smugglers and the traffickers. We crossed a long desert observing many dead bodies, their clothes and shoes scattered here and there on the field. As we had nobody to appeal to, we kept silent and endured everything for fear of further abuse. That was how we managed to save our lives (Abdulbasit, male 37 years old).

Fatuma described the severity of her journey:

I faced many physical problems. Illegal migration is risky for human beings in general and for women in particular. The journey was so difficult. I travelled long distances together with other migrants, crossing deserts. As we travelled in deserts, it was common to stay for two to three days without eating food and getting a drop of water. I was very exhausted and unable to walk. Consequently, the traffickers seriously beat me with a bamboo stick and dragged me on the ground. My left rib was injured, and I still feel pain as a result. Despite all those problems I kept silent and tolerated the abuse because of what could have happened to me had I not kept silent (Fatuma, female, 27 years old).

Apart from the physical exhaustion of the journey, the smugglers and the traffickers demanded more money from the migrants. When the migrants could not pay, the smugglers and traffickers used corporal punishment to force the migrants to call to either the families in the home country or somebody else they may know in Saudi Arabia to send them the money they needed. The experience of Bilal narrated below is evidence of this.

We faced a lot of physical abuse. The smugglers in Jigiga transferred us to the organized smugglers and robbers in Somalia. The organized group of robbers and smugglers in Somali assaulted me severely. They took everything I had including my clothes, money and shoes. After they had taken everything I had and left me empty-handed, they handed me over to other organized group of smugglers and traffickers in Yemen known as “Abdulgawul, an Arabic word which means strong persons who transfer migrants from Yemen to Saudi Arabia. The Abdulgawuls asked us to give them money. As most of us had ran out of our money by the time we got there and could not give them the amount they requested, they stripped us of our clothes and flogged us. They threatened us with a gun and forced us to call our family members or somebody else we may know in Saudi Arabia to send money otherwise they warned us they would kill us. Those migrants who had families in home countries or relatives in Saudi Arabia called them and were saved after they had sent them money. However, as I had no family member in home country or relatives abroad who could send me money, I begged them in the name of Allah not to kill me. They detained me for three months and

finally released me after I had endured severe physical injury and labour exploitation (Bilal, male, 34 years old).

In confirmation of Bilal's experience, the male FGD participants described that *abdulgawuls* force the migrant to call his family member left behind to reach for him while they are flogging him or dropping melted rubber on his head. They also threatened the family left behind saying that they would kill the migrant family member unless the family sent a specified amount of money within a short period. Whenever the families hear such kind of threatening and the crying of the migrant family member for help, they ran here and there to search for ransom money to pay the *abdulgawul* and release the migrant. In most cases, the family left behind pays the ransom money by taking loan from relatives, friends, moneylenders or selling the only precious asset they have to use for difficult times as the FGD participants revealed.

The physical abuse went beyond mere physical punishment and many migrants lost their lives under the extreme conditions of the migration journey. Abdushukur and Mamadsan described the deadly journey where migrants lost their lives as:

There were illegal armed Somali sailors who transported the 'illegal migrants' from the Djibouti border to Yemen. The sailors and their supporters were so cruel. They loaded people beyond the carrying capacity of the boat. While we were travelling under suffocating conditions, a strong wind came and forced the boat to one side. Consequently, the boat submerged after few minutes and all of us fell into the Indian Ocean as we approached the Yemen border. As I fell into the ocean, I immediately stretched out my hands, caught a plastic water container that was floating in the ocean and which had belonged to someone who had drowned. While I was floating in the ocean with the help of the plastic container, a strong wind came up again and blew me towards the border. That was how I survived. Nobody was rescued. Everyone from the boat died except me. After a while, the United Nations agency operating in Yemen came, searched and obtained the dead bodies of 85 persons from the ocean. I myself observed and counted the dead bodies of those persons. I was extremely shocked with what had happened, and its image still disturbs me. Allah saved me with his help. I have nothing to say except thanking Him for saving my life (Abdushukur, male 38 years old).

Mamdason described the perilous ocean journey undertaken by migrants as follows.

I and the many other illegal migrants crossed a long sea in an old boat under risky conditions. The boat was loaded beyond its capacity. Unfortunately, a big wind came up while we were travelling on the sea and rocked the boat from side to side. Many of my travel mates drowned in the sea and I saw them dying. I was so shocked, fixed to the boat and continued to pray to God to save my life. I could not believe what happened. Thanks to Allah! I was lucky to survive. The Creator saved my life (Mamadsan, male, 25 years old).

Besides migrants drowning at sea due to unseaworthy vessels, the smugglers and traffickers themselves also drowned some migrants who had become mentally disturbed due to physical abuse and anxiety related to the tough journey. Abdulbasit described the brutal treatment as:

While we were crossing sea by boat, one of the migrants went out of his mind. He became crazy due to the day-to-day suffering and difficulties. He would shout continuously saying 'Please leave me alone, let me go and buy a cigarette' and caused a disturbance. He struggled with everybody in the boat to get off. The boat crew assaulted him with a stick to silence him. However, he continued shouting. The boat crew then drowned him in the sea and we continued the journey. His dead body was left in the sea. I observed the same phenomenon while 32 of us were stuffed in one truck while travelling from Yemen to Saudi Arabia. One person accidentally fell from the truck and landed on the ground on his head. When I looked at him, he was already dead. I called Sawat, the driver, and told him "Fenna Fermot", an Arabic word, which means a person has died. Please stop the car. The driver replied that it was no problem, let him go, you "habesha" (Ethiopians) are as many as the grains of sand and there is no need to worry even if tens or thousands of you die. He continued driving. We left his dead body in the desert and continued our journey. It is a tragedy. I saw all this with my own eyes and the images still disturb me whenever I remember them. In the overall process of the journey, the fact that I spoke a little Arabic helped me at least to describe my situation and beg both the smugglers and traffickers to understand my problem. Had it

not been that I could speak a little Arabic, I would have been died of their brutal maltreatment (Abdubasit, male 37 years old).

Regarding this, both the female and male FGD participants also described the risks associated with illegal migration. The participants emphasized that there are many people from their village whose family could not get any information on since they had left home many years ago. These imply that probably these people died due to the risks associate with illegal migration. Of course, there are also reported cases of deaths to the families in their village according to the FGD participants.

Not only did the illegal migrants face physical abuse on their journey, but also they suffered abuse from employers in the place of destination. Many female migrants work as domestic workers. Some of the women tell of the abuse they experienced at the hands of their employers:

My employer was very cruel. She assaulted me every day. I did my best to please her with all the domestic activities I was doing. But she was never satisfied with what I did. Sometimes she would say the rice was not cooked well; other times she would complain that the rice or the vegetables were overcooked. If the food was prepared well, she would complain that either the wall or the bath room was not cleaned well, or the clothes were not washed well. She never lacked a reason to blame and beat me. She insulted me like a dog. Of course, the fact that I had no experience in cooking their food also made me vulnerable to her verbal and physical abuse. As a result, I endured frequent slapping and assaults with a metal rod. As I had nobody to report the assault to, I simply kept silent for fear of the worst thing that might happen to me and passed my whole life there with tensions (Fatmua, female 27 years old).

My employer's wife was always quarrelling and belittling me over domestic activities especially about cooking. After I cleaned the walls of the rooms, she checked it by rubbing with a piece of clean white cloth. If she found a little dirt, she would start with a dozen insults and beatings. She was not comfortable with the way I cooked. She often complained that the taste of the food had changed. She frequently grumbled that there was too much salt or oil in the sauce. Of course, I had no previous exposure to their cooking styles and tastes of their favourite food. I made mistakes while cooking, especially in the beginning. I had

also no formal training in cooking modern food as I was accustomed to our local traditional method of cooking. So I made mistakes and was frequently insulted and experienced severe physical punishment. One time she even burnt me with heated metal. I suffered a lot. However, I tried to learn from my mistakes and gradually improved over time, and that was how I managed to survive (Mishel, female, 27 years old).

When I told my employer that I had to return to my country and asked her to give me my previous two month's salary, she and her husband severely assaulted me and threw me into the street when I became unconscious. Fortunately, one Ethiopian driver working there found me and took me to the Ethiopian Embassy. The next day, the Ethiopian Embassy arranged for me to fly back to Addis Ababa. My left hand was broken, and I was hardly conscious when I reached Bole International Airport. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society workers immediately took me from Bole International Airport to a hospital where I was treated for seven days and sent to my place of origin after I had recovered a bit. I am better now but still I feel pain in my hand because of the injury (Fedila, female, 35 years old).

Physical abuse was not only limited to the female illegal migrant domestic workers. Many male 'illegal migrants', engaged mainly in construction work in Saudi Arabia, reported frequent abuse from their supervisors:

One of the few places we (the 'illegal migrants') could obtain employment in Saudi Arabia was in areas invisible to government and the security bodies like construction sites. Most of the construction engineers, masons and supervisors working there were Egyptians. The Egyptian construction workers hire us (the Ethiopian male 'illegal migrants') mainly as daily labourers as we lack technical or expertise-based knowledge. We worked from dawn to dusk without rest. If the supervisors found somebody resting for a moment, they slapped or beat the person with sticks like a donkey. My supervisor seriously slapped and kicked me many times while I took a little rest. Therefore, one should always remains alert and active in order not be punished (Mensur, male, 32 years old).

The construction supervisors were very tough. They did not tolerate even a simple mistake. They beat everybody for simple reasons like seeing the person talking to

his fellow workers. However, most daily labourers on the construction sites often received severe punishment and physical injuries for making mistakes while mixing cement with sand for the construction. As we had no previous experience in construction, it was common for all of us to make mistakes, especially at the beginning. I made mistakes twice and that resulted in my being beaten severely by my supervisor. I could not do anything except keep silent because he could lay me off from the job, which I only got after many challenges. As the employers knew that we had no legal support to work there, they could take any measures they liked against us at any time (Fares, male 45 years old).

Another male study participant, who was engaged in keeping cattle, also described the physical abuse of his day-to-day experience:

As I could not enter big cities due to fear of being caught and arrested by the police, I was employed by a Saudi pastoralist living in a rural area to feed and keep camels and goats. My duty was mainly to continuously provide fodder and water for his livestock. However, as the herds of livestock were large it was very difficult for me to feed all of them as per the employer's schedule. The weather conditions of the country were also very difficult for me to adapt to and undertake my duties properly. As a result, I often experienced unusual tiredness and consequently failed to keep to the feeding schedule for the livestock. My employer assaulted me severely many times as a result. He warned me that he would kill me should I attempt to escape from his home. As I had nowhere to go and nobody to appeal to, I simply cried like a child and begged him to leave me alone whenever he beat me (Jebal, male, 32 years old).

Physical punishments like assaulting, slapping, pinching, flogging, burning with metal and plastic are well documented tactics used by smugglers and traffickers to get control (Abdulraheem & Oladipo 2010:39; United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking 2008:9). The study participants experienced abuse at every point of their illegal migration journey – from more money extorted from them by smugglers and traffickers to severe physical abuse that included being slapped, beaten and even burned resulting in injuries such as wounds, broken limbs and ribs. Some migrant lost their lives because of the maltreatment by the smugglers and traffickers. Those unable to endure the pressure and abuse often committed suicide. Many also died while attempting to escape (ILO 2011:53).

The mistreatment and physical abuse continued even after they reached Saudi Arabia. Here, the employers were the main perpetrators of the abuse against both male and female migrants. Lack of adequate skills and training resulted in physical abuse of migrants. With nowhere to go, or no one to report the abuse to or appeal for help, migrants had no recourse except to keep silent for fear of worse abuse or losing their lives.

As a consequence, the migrants suffered physical pain such as headaches, fatigue stomach-aches, chest, back, pelvic, dental, eye and ear pain (World Health Organization 2012:2; Wickham 2009:2; Jayasree 2004:58).

3.3 Labor Exploitation

Labour exploitation refers to a condition where somebody recruits an individual by force and obliged them to work for long working hours with no/little payment under grave conditions involuntarily. The ILO defines forced labour as “all work or service which is extracted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person has not offered him/her self voluntarily” (ILO 1930). Labour exploitation can take place in both illegally and legally established, well-regulated and monitored businesses (Jagers & Rijken 2014:48).

Illegal migrants are usually forced to engage in various activities. They have no say in any of the type of activities they engage in, the hours they have to work, the length of time they stay in a particular job, or the minimum wage paid to them. The employers themselves determine these issues mainly.

The study participants had similar experiences. The brokers, smugglers and traffickers initially convinced them that they would secure decent jobs with good pay. However, they transferred the migrants to the employers in Saudi Arabia and forced them to engage in whatever type of activities decided by the employer without having any say in the length of time they had to work, the type of activities they had to engage in and the amount of pay they had to receive.

The extreme labour exploitation experienced by the migrants was particularly arduous for females who were often employed as housemaids. They engaged in domestic work such as cleaning, washing, cooking and taking care of children for long hours and often without pay. Fatuma highlighted the deceit of the brokers and the exploitative conditions migrants as:

I became aware of the fact that the brokers and smugglers had deceived me when I was at home, saying that Saudi Arabia is a country where everybody easily gets any work of his/her interest. I found that everything in Saudi Arabia was the opposite to what the brokers and the smugglers said. I was employed by a family as a house maid through a broker. As getting employment there was very difficult, I had no option except doing whatever activities were available. Otherwise, I would die of hunger. I did all the domestic chores for the family who employed me. I worked from dawn to dusk. I woke up at 5:30 AM in the morning and went to sleep at 11:30 PM most of the time. Although the activities were tiresome and exhausting, I was earning very little money. I was earning 2000 Saudi Riyal a month. That was very little payment for the work I was doing and the time I spent every day on the activities. Had it not been that I was living there and having my meals with them, it would have been very hard for me to even feed myself with the salary alone (Fatuma, female 27 years old).

Zubeda and Fedila told the following similar tales of deception and exploitation.

After I reached Saudi Arabia I found that all the brokers', smugglers' and the traffickers' promises of helping me to secure the type of work I would have liked were false because it was very difficult for migrants to get employment there. The only work available, especially for women, was as a domestic worker. I got employment as a domestic worker for one family. I cooked food, fed the family, washed clothes, and cleaned the rooms and walls. I worked long hours every day. I always went to bed at 3 AM and woke up at 5:30 AM in the morning. The routine household chores were endless. I had little time to take any rest. Even though I worked day and night, my employer never, ever thanked me. She would criticize a single mistake I made harshly, ignoring the many things I did right. She even assaulted me many times for simple mistakes (Zubeda, female, 25 years old).

I did household activities every day of the week without rest. I worked not only for my employer but also for her relatives. After I had finished all the daily domestic work in my employer's home, she also forced me to work for her family. I often worked for more than 17 hours a day without any rest. It was back breaking work. Often my hands became numb due to washing clothes for a long time without rest. Even though the work was back breaking, and I worked day and night, my salary

was very small. I was earning 1800 Saudi Riyal, which was very little for the time and labour spent on the domestic tasks I had to perform. The good thing was that I was not paying house rent and for food; the employers themselves provided (Fedila, female, 35 years old).

Most of the Ethiopian women who migrate to the Middle East in both regular and irregular ways engage in domestic work, which the labour policy of the destination countries does not regulate. This makes them more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (Mefin & Guday 2017:69). Similar to the females, male migrants also face exploitation. Male migrants working in the construction sector experienced the same kind of exploitation. Abdubasit and Mensur stated the exploitation they experienced in the construction sector as:

I worked from 7:30 AM to 8: 30 PM on construction sites. I started out mixing cement and sand. After some time, the supervisors changed my job to cutting and connecting ferrous metal used to erect the building under construction. I was earning 40-50 Saudi Riyal a day, of which I had to pay 10 Saudi Riyal every day for three months to a broker who had secured the job for me. I had no means to negotiate and secure the job myself as I had no Saudi identity card to enable me to make such deals. Therefore, the only way to obtain the job was through brokers by paying them commission. As my monthly earnings were too small to eat enough, most of the time I had only a piece of bread and a cup of tea for both breakfast and lunch. I ate dinner rarely in order to save the money and use it for my survival. In short, the situation subjected me to exploitation throughout my stay in Saudi Arabia (Abdubasit, male, 37 years old).

We cut and connected metal on the construction sites together with other 'illegal migrants'. I started the work at 7:00 AM in the morning and went back home at 9:00 PM just to sleep. My job was cleaning the construction site, watering the building under construction, and mixing sand and cement. I was busy throughout the day. I had only a half hour resting time for lunch. However, I was only earning 2000 Riyal monthly after the broker had deducted his own commission. That was too little to even cover the cost of my food and house rent. Because it is very difficult for 'illegal migrants' to get jobs in Saudi, many of them earned very little. Some migrants managed to get better jobs on construction sites by paying brokers commission from their monthly earnings. As our earnings were too small

to cover all expenses, we were living in a small room in a group of 3-5 persons. As a group, we bought and ate whatever cheap foods were available in order to save and use the meagre earning throughout the month (Mensur, male, 32 years old).

Exploitative living and working conditions are the most common types of problems faced by illegal migrants (ILO 2011:50). Illegal migrants become victims of labour exploitation both in transit and in place of destinations in a wide range of industries like agriculture, construction, domestic work, entertainment, forestry, fishing, mining and textiles (IOM 2015:3). The exploitation varies from imposition of excessive working hours with unfair pay to verbal and physical abuse and even to sexual harassment and sexual attacks (Calandruccio 2005:278). Participants told of having to work to earn money for exploitative brokers and smugglers in transit countries on the way to the destination country:

When I reached Yemen, I had ran out of all the money I had. So I decided to stay in Sana'a, (the capital city of Yemen), for a certain period of time to work and collect some money to continue the remaining journey to Saudi Arabia. Otherwise, I had nothing to pay the smugglers. But I could not get a job in Sana'a. Consequently, I left Sana'a and travelled to a rural area where I got employment on khat farm as a daily labourer through a broker. There, I undertook laborious activities such as digging plots of land to plant a khat seedlings, watering and harvesting khat for the farmer for very little payment. I worked for 12-15 hours per day throughout the week earning only 5000 Yemeni Riyal per month, which was almost equivalent to 500 Ethiopian Birr (ETB), of which I was paying 500 Riyal monthly to the broker who obtained the job for me for six months. It was extremely laborious work with little payment. But I did it as I had no option (Abdushukur, male, 38 years old).

Since I did not have money and could not pay commission to the smugglers from Yemen to Saudi Arabia, they made an agreement with one oil-distributing corporation in Yemen and transferred me to the corporation to work. I was serving in one of the corporation's gas stations for long hours only getting food for my daily survival without any payment for three months. The smugglers

ordered me to work there for three months and pay them. Otherwise, they would not release me to continue my journey to Saudi Arabia. I had no option other than accepting what they said. I could not resist because I feared that they would punish me. After three months, they took me from Yeman to Saudi Arabia (Siraj, male 21 years old).

3.4 Economic Exploitation

In addition to the social, political and cultural factors that drive illegal migration, the involvement of brokers and smugglers in the process for economic gain exacerbate the situation. They make large profits from the exploitation of the people they transfer from one place to another with false promises of helping them to get decent employment with better pay. Illegal migrants are subject to exploitation, both en route and in the place of destination, by having to pay extra expenses, having to work long hours without pay, deductions from their salaries, and in extreme cases, having their salaries withheld (IOM 2015:3-4; Sahan Foundation and IGAD Security Sector Program 2016:4; (Johnson 2012:370).

The economic exploitation of the study participants started within the home community when they were required to pay service charges the brokers and smugglers for the so-called facilitation of a safe journey and accommodation on the way to the destination country. Most of the study participants told of how they paid a considerable amount of money to the brokers for promises of a safe transit and paid work in the destination country. The families of the migrants paid for the brokers and smugglers by selling scarce resources such as land and the only savings they had for resisting bad times or, in most cases, borrowing from relatives and friends. The following excerpts highlight the costs extracted by the brokers and smugglers and the difficulties in obtaining the monies to facilitate the illegal migration journey and a job in the destination country:

Overall, I paid 10,000 ETB to the brokers and the smugglers until I reached Saudi Arabia. My parents covered part of the payment by selling the only cow they had. I borrowed the rest from my friends. Had it not been for the support of my parents and friends, I would have nothing in my pocket. I deeply regret paying that much money as what I earned from the migration did not cover what I spent for my journey to reach there (Seifu, male 25 years old).

I paid 4000 ETB to the brokers before I started the journey. They never told me that I would have to pay more, and I assumed that the 4000 ETB was the overall payment to reach Saudi Arabia. I later saw that this was not the case. The brokers and smugglers within the Ethiopian border divided that initial payment among themselves. When I crossed the Ethiopian border, other smugglers demanded an additional 2000 ETB and 3000ETB in Djibouti and Yemen respectively. I paid 2000 ETB for those in Djibouti and only 1500 ETB for those in Yemen because I ran out of the money and my pocket was left empty. In total, I paid them 7500 ETB. I rented out the small plot of agricultural land I had for five years and used it to pay for them (Abdulbasit, male 37 years old).

I was paying money for the brokers and the smugglers at the various destinations points until I reached Saudi Arabia. For instance, I paid them 6000 ETB until I reached Djibouti and became empty hand. My family sold the only ox they had and gave me that money. Since I could not continue the remaining journey without paying the smugglers, I decided to work daily labour in Djibouti for some time. It took me three months to work in Djibouti and collect the money, which I paid the smugglers for the rest of my journey to Saudi Arabia. Roughly, I paid about 9000 ETB to reach Saudi Arabia (Yahaya, male, 24 years old).

The broker and smugglers deceived many people with false promises of a better life waiting for them abroad and received huge amounts of money from them. People, families or relatives were paying 10,000-15,000 Ethiopian Birr and even more to a single broker falsely promising that they would facilitate a safe arrival and an employment opportunity for the emigrant. Most of our community trust people, and the illegal brokers used the trust as an oppourtunity to exploit everybody. I too was deceived and paid them 11,000 ETB until I reached Saudi Arabia. But I could not come up with the same amount of money upon my return as my earning was too small and I had been supporting my family left in the home country while I was there (Fatuma, female, 27 years old).

In some cases, the employer pays the cost of the migrant's journey. If the migrant is not in a position to repay the employer, the brokers and smugglers themselves pay it for him/her and seek a refund from the employers in destination countries. Such conditions keep many of the

illegal migrants in the same place working for a long period of time with little/no payment until they fully pay back the debt (Voronova & Radjenovic 2016:4). Fedila was an example of someone who delved into debt bondage and explained how having to pay this debt to her employer and having money deducted from her salary for no reason left her with nothing:

I paid 6000 ETB for the local brokers who cheated me with the false promise of an excellent opportunity I would enjoy in Saudi Arabia. The payment to the brokers in Yemen was not included in the initial payment. They told me that my employer in Jeddah covers the cost from Yemen to Saudi Arabia. Of course, the employer paid a sum of 5000 Riyal to the Yemen brokers to facilitate my transportation and for a service fee to arrive there. The person employed me with a monthly salary of 1800 Riyal after my arrival, but I did not receive anything for three months because I had to pay the debt to the employer. I accepted that I had to pay the debt, but the employer sometimes deducted from my salary for no reason. Whenever I asked for clarification, the employer replied to me in an offensive manner saying that whatever they paid me was enough. I lost a lot of money due to debt payment and deduction of my salary for no reasons by the employers (Fedila, female, 35 years old).

Mamadson also described how he paid the brokers commission and the money deducted from his salary without adequate reason as follows.

Since I had no legal documents and had moved from place to place in that country, I could not search and obtain employment openly. All migrants there were getting employment through brokers by paying them a certain portion of their salary as a commission. Hence, I agreed to pay them commission and the brokers obtained a job for me in one construction site. I was paying 20% of my salary to the brokers for three to five months. Even though they were getting commission from me, the brokers were not genuine. They were colluding with the employers and deducting money from my salary for no reason. There were very few months that I received my full salary throughout my stay in that country. There were even times when they did not pay me at all. Because of that, and the high cost of living, I could not bring the amount of money I spent on the migration when I came back home. Since I had no way of accusing them legally, I could not do anything but keep silent, because they had the right to call the police and have

me imprisoned if they wanted as I had no legal permission to live and work there. Overall, the situation there was troublesome for me. It was not as portrayed by the brokers, smugglers, and friends just to convince me (Mamadson, male, 25 years old).

3.5 Sexual Abuse

Female migrants were particularly susceptible to sexual abuse. Some female study participants told how the smugglers or employers forced and raped them as the following narrations indicated.

I left my home country for Saudi Arabia to get employment, better pay, improve myself, and support my family. However, I could not succeed in realizing my expectations. Rather, I became victim of sexual abuse. I will never forget the cruel brokers I encountered in Yemen. They asked me to give them money to travel from Yemen to Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, I could not pay them as I had spent all the money that I had on the preceding transit route there. They separated me and took me far away from the other 'illegal migrants'. There were three males. They threatened me with a knife and took turns to rape me. After I reached Saudi Arabia, they diagnosed before they employed me and the result indicated that I had gonorrhoea. The physician prescribed me drugs and I cured after that. Allah saved me from HIV/AIDS at least (Mishel, female, 27 years old).

Fatuma also told of the sexual assault she endured on her journey:

The smugglers were such barbarous and brutal people. They had no sympathy for human beings. I had never seen such kinds of people. They are beasts. They raped me many times by force without any protection. Had it not been that I had taken birth control before I started the journey, I would have become pregnant. Because of their brutal deeds against me, I hated my life and myself in general. I did not imagine that I could resist all those challenges and survive as a human being. Thanks to Allah! I am able to exist until now. He (the creator) gave me the endurance (Fatuma, female, 27 years old).

Zubeda described how the smugglers and the son of her employer coerced and sexually abused her saying that:

We stayed in a house owned by the smugglers in Jijiga, a town in the Eastern part of Ethiopia, for more than a week before we started the journey. It was common for women to experience sexual abuse there. The smugglers demanded for sexual favours from the women migrants in addition to money. It was impossible to refuse them as serious punishments like slapping, intimidation and assault followed the refusal. I encountered something similar in Yemen. One of the smugglers called and asked me to have sexual relations with him. I tried to refuse. But he repeatedly slapped and intimidated me by pointing a gun at my head. Under those dreadful circumstances, I had sexual intercourse with him to save my life. The same situation followed me after I reached Saudi Arabia and got employment. The son of my employer frequently came in the middle of the night to where I slept and asked to have a sexual relationship with him. I refused him so many times. But he forced and raped me one day when no one was home. He gave me post pills and warned me not to speak a single word about what happened to me. I kept silent and continued my jobs, as I had no person and institution to appeal to for help (Zubeda, female, 25 years old).

3.5 Restricted Communication and Isolation from Social Interaction

The returned migrants described how they were confined to one place throughout their stay in Saudi Arabia and how they were isolated from any social interaction. Some of them were restricted to one place due to fear of arrest by police, as they were illegal residents. Others described that their employers restricted them. Their employers made it impossible for them to communicate with their families and friends at home or even with anyone else there. Zubeda described the prevention and restriction from anybody else as:

I could not make telephone calls even to my family let alone anyone once I entered my employer's home. She snatched my cell phone and hid it because she thought that if I had any means to communicate with somebody, I might leave her home if I faced problems. For instance, she suspected that I would call and report the problems I encountered in her home to somebody. People might then help me to leave her home. She prevented and restricted me for fear of that (Zubeda, female, 25 years old).

Michel had no contact with anyone for two years:

I had no means to communicate with my family because my employer confiscated my cell phone and prevented me from communicating with my family and relatives at home. The employer also refused to allow me to use their home cell phone. So I had no communication with my family for the two years I stayed there. I had no chance to go out and phone from the outside, as I feared my employers and the police. As I had no identity card, I feared that the police may arrest me. Even if I had a legal identity card and could do so, my employer and his family did not allow me to go out even for a second. They warned me and strictly forbade from leaving the house and communicating with anybody. Even if I saw Ethiopian migrants on the street when I sometimes went out on an errand, I was afraid of even exchanging greetings with them because I feared my employer (Mishel, female, 27 years old).

The isolation sometimes went beyond the mere restriction of their communications with anyone else. Fedila and Fatuma described how they were not even able to seek medical treatment:

As I worked for long hours without a rest, I was frequently sick and could not even receive medical treatment because my employer's wife did not allow me to go to a health institution. She suspected that I might use the opportunity and escape from her home. Instead of sending me to a health institution for treatment, she bought me drugs without a prescription (Fedila, female, 35 years old).

As I was undertaking backbreaking chores without any rest, I was suffering from serious back pain for which I never got medical treatment because my employer did not allow me to do so. I was totally confined to the house by the employer throughout most of my stay there. She restrained me because she thought that I might get information and try and return home if I got in contact with somebody else (Fatuma, female, 27 years old old).

Staying away for a long time without having any communication with their families resulted in the disintegration of the family for some of the study participants. Abdulbasit, Abdushukur and Fares all describe the effect of not having any contact had on their families:

As I stayed there for a long time without having communication with her, my wife assumed that I was not alive and appealed to the court for a divorce. The court

had notified me to appear for an appointment three times but I could not appear as I was not aware of this. Finally, the court concluded our marriage as divorce in my absence. She was already married to another person when I returned home. I heard all these things when I returned home after three years. I left empty hand. I did not even have a house even to live in. I re-married another woman recently and am now living in a rented house (Abdubasit, male 37 years old).

I worked for a private wood working enterprise outside of Jeddah City. I had no way to communicate with my family left at home and send them money. My family suffered a lot. Two of my children left home and migrated to somewhere I do not know. I am still searching for them, but I cannot get any information regarding their whereabouts (Abdushukur, male, 38 years old).

Fares told of how his family suffered during his absence:

I had no means to communicate with my family. It was not possible for us to appear in public places while we were in Saudi Arabia. As we had no legal identity cards, it was very difficult for us to move from place to place for fear of arrest by the police. The construction supervisors did not allow us to leave the construction sites for fear of punishment for employing illegal workers. We were leading a confined life in the construction sites. I had no way of sending money to my family at home during the first year of my stay there. They did not even have a piece of bread for daily survival. Because of that, two of my children dropped out of school, left home, migrated to Jimma town and joined the street life (Fares, male, 45years old).

As far as the migrants' communication with their families is concerned, both the male and female FGD participants also described that a number of migrants never called their families since they left home. There are many migrants from their village whose families do not know whether they are dead or alive due to this reason. The participants further disclosed that this is because their employers often do not allow them to do so. The key informant from Labour and Social Affairs Office of the district also mentioned that the smugglers, traffickers and even the employers often block the communication between the migrant and their family members left behind in order to exploit them and conceal information related to the exploitation.

4. Conclusion

Field data reveals that study participants who took the illegal migration route experienced a wide range of abuse and exploitation both en route and in the destination country. The abuse included physical, psychological and sexual abuse.

While the journey en route was itself physically exhausting with migrants experiencing hunger and thirst, they were also subject to physical abuse such as insults, beating, slapping, kicking, and bodily burn from the smugglers. Both men and women were subject to abuse. Injuries inflicted included bodily wounds, broken limbs and ribs. In addition to the physical abuse, the smugglers and traffickers robbed, and exploited migrants economically charging them for extra services at different transit points. In this ways, they held the migrants in debt bondage. Women became subject to sexual abuse by smugglers and by employers.

The abuse continued in the country of destination by employers themselves. Economic exploitation took the form of long working hours with little rest, difficult workloads, reduced pay or wages withheld altogether. Punishment was particularly harsh for those with few or no skills. In addition, the situation deprived the study participants from getting sufficient or healthy food. Women, usually domestic workers, had been subject to sexual abuse by employers and their families. Study participants were restricted in terms of their interaction with their countrymen and communication with their families left behind in the home country.

The various types of abuse and exploitation experienced by the returned migrants implies the returnees require various types of reintegration support depending on the individual experiences of the returned migrants. This also involves responses from family, relatives, neighbours, government and non-governmental organizations.

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Percentage contribution of each author in the manuscript

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