

‘Recruitment’ and Job-Seeking Mechanisms for Zimbabwean Women Care Workers in the Domestic Services Sector in South Africa

Precious Baison*

**University of Pretoria, South Africa*

Email: preciouszhou@gmail.com

This article explores the migration of Zimbabwean women to South Africa to undertake various types of care work within the broader domestic work sector. Studies on care migration have largely discussed South to North migration flows. This is despite evidence showing that there are significant flows of migrants within countries in the Global South. This article seeks to understand the recruitment and job-seeking strategies employed by women in this South-South migration flow in light of their migrant status and processes related to their migration. It is based on a qualitative study and utilizes data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants from four domestic worker recruitment agencies and 23 care workers in two cities – Johannesburg and Pretoria. The leading findings were that Zimbabwean migrant care workers in South Africa faced exploitative working conditions as the majority of them were undocumented or irregular. They faced challenges in obtaining valid work visas and therefore, migrant care workers could not seek employment through formal channels such as recruitment agencies. They used informal channels such as social networks and the ‘market’. The article discusses the implications of using such strategies with regards to the subsequent working conditions and the protection of care workers’ rights.

Keywords: female migrants, care work, domestic work, migrant status, job search, social networks, recruitment agencies

INTRODUCTION

Domestic work forms a significant part of jobs in the care industry and is a major source of employment for migrant workers. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 2018 there were about 70.1 million domestic workers making up 18% of the global care work force, with women constituting 70.2% (ILO, 2018). The ILO also reported that there were an estimated 11.5 million migrant domestic workers globally, representing about 17.2% of the total share of domestic workers in 2013 (ILO, 2015). In South Africa, the domestic services sector plays a significant role. Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2019) shows that just over one million of the country's 52 million people were employed as domestic workers in the third quarter of 2019; this represents about 6% of all employed people in South Africa. It is to this end that South Africa has been cited as having the highest number of domestic workers in the southern African region (Hengeveld, 2015). Whilst this sector is dominated by local black women, who include internal migrants, available evidence shows regional migrants as part of the work force (Griffin, 2010; Kiwanuka et al., 2015; Zack et al., 2019; Jinnah, 2020). Using evidence from the 2011 Census, Statistics South Africa (2015) reported that with regards to employment, 62.6% of the international migrants were employed in the formal sector, 17.7% in the informal sector and 17.1% in private households. The report stated that almost three-quarters (73.3%) of migrants working in private households are from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, with other African countries making up 8.1%.

Domestic workers are employed in private households and their duties involve caring for some members of their families; thus, research has pointed to an overlap between care work and domestic work. The International Labour Organization (2018: 6) defines care work as “consisting of activities and relations involved in meeting the physical, psychological and emotional needs of adults and children, old and young, frail and able-bodied”. The situation in many migrant destination areas is that care workers and domestic workers are essentially carrying out ‘housework and care’. That is, in addition to doing housekeeping, they provide care for children, the elderly and other vulnerable people within private homes, for some form of remuneration (Cox, 2016; WHO, 2017; ILO, 2018).

The employment of migrant workers in the domestic and care worker sector has been analyzed through the concept of global care chains. The concept relates to how women from developing countries migrate to take up employment, caring for children and others in families located in wealthier neighboring, regional or international countries, while they seek help from their extended families to take over their own care-giving responsibilities (Yeates, 2005). While much of the available literature on global care chains emanates from studies based on migration flows from South to North, increasing care demands propelled by social and demographic transformations in many countries of the Global South make the concept relevant to the South-South context. The transformations include greater numbers of women

entering the labor market, increased migration, and the rise in the aging population. This article is based on a study that explored the experiences of Zimbabwean women who migrated to South Africa to undertake various types of care work within the broader domestic work sector. It seeks to contribute to knowledge on the work experiences of care workers in the South-South migration, by documenting the different strategies used by Zimbabwean migrant women to find employment in the domestic sector. It also highlights how the migrant status (legality) shapes these recruitment and job-seeking mechanisms.

CONTEXTUALIZATION: MIGRANT STATUS AND RECRUITMENT PROCESSES FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

The recruitment and employment of migrant domestic workers is governed by the immigration and labor policies of the destination countries. Scholars have argued that the migrant domestic workers have been incorporated into the host countries through policies that limit their full participation in the labor market as well as protection of their labor rights (Parreñas, 2017; Romero, 2018). Migration and employment of care workers typically involve recruitment agencies and other intermediaries, sponsorship visas that tie workers to their employers as well as specific migrant recruitment programs for domestic workers, such as the Canadian Caregiver Program (CCP). Considered 'best practice', the CCP was put in place to cover a shortage of caregivers willing to live-in with employers and to provide care to members of households. (Fudge, 2011; King-Dejarddin, 2019). By the same token, domestic workers migrating to Middle Eastern countries such as the United Arab Emirates are employed under the Kafala sponsorship system, which also ties the migrant to the employer (Parreñas, 2017; Romero, 2018). While the involvement of recruitment agencies in this process ensures that migrant domestic workers have employment contracts and are legally resident in the destination countries, concerns have been raised that sponsored visas often have stringent conditions that, for example, make it difficult to change employers if the migrant worker is unhappy about the employment conditions. Romero (2018) argues that migrant domestic workers first encounter abuse through contact with recruiters and other intermediaries that facilitate their migration and employment in destination countries. Challenges of using recruitment agencies that have been highlighted in the literature, include that they may charge exorbitant fees to assist migrant workers in finding employment and in acquiring travel documents (Anderson, 2000; WHO, 2017; Romero, 2018). Recruitment agencies can confiscate migrants' passports, and deduct travel costs and other expenses from their salaries (WHO, 2017; Romero, 2018). Further, it has been reported that recruitment agencies may offer misleading contracts in which terms of employment are not explicitly defined in relation to the position they are employed, working hours and remuneration (De Regt, 2010; Ghaddar et al., 2018; Laiboni, 2020).

Isike (2017) has shown that migration into South Africa after apartheid has

shifted from being solely male-dominated to include women and children. With particular reference to the Zimbabwe-South Africa migration corridor, Crush et al. (2017) argue that following the Zimbabwean political and economic deterioration, from the 2000s, outmigration increased and became mixed in character comprising both sexes, all age groups – from young children to seniors – as well as skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled migrants. Studies focusing on skilled migration have focused on doctors, nurses and teachers (see for example, Weda and De Villiers, 2019).

The employment of migrant workers in South Africa is governed by the country's Immigration Act 13 of 2002 (amended in 2014) (RSA, 2002), which requires migrants who intend to live or work in this country to obtain a temporary or permanent residence permit. However, low-skilled migrants often face challenges in acquiring this as they cannot meet the requirements (Fish, 2013; Thebe, 2017). According to Fish, applicants have to undergo a "rigorous screening process that systematically disadvantages 'unskilled' migrants" (Fish, 2013: 236). She further points out that applicants have to show proof that they have sufficient financial means to survive in South Africa, which is a significant hurdle to overcome. Thus, they resort to entering the country and working without proper documentation, which leaves them without legal protection and vulnerable (Fish, 2013; Mbiyozo, 2018; Vanyoro, 2019a). It can thus be argued that South Africa's immigration laws are favorable to professional migrants with 'scarce skills' as potential employers are required to prove that they have not been able to find an equally qualified South African national, in order for an applicant to obtain a work permit (Fish, 2013).

While other routes, which include the asylum and refugee process under the Refugees Act 130 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) and the regularizations schemes have been available, they do not fully cover migrant domestic workers. The Refugees Act of 1998 provides for asylum to anyone who can show that they have reasonable fear of persecution that precludes return to their home country. Fish (2013) explains that this Act offers protection only to registered refugees and asylum seekers, thus leaving out a large number of migrants who decide to migrate and cannot establish refugee status. The effect is that migrants seeking domestic work in South Africa face obstacles to acquiring the legal authority to work (Fish, 2013; Vanyoro, 2019b).

Another way in which migrants have managed to stay and work in South Africa is through regularization schemes. The South African government introduced the Dispensation of Zimbabweans Project (DZP) which sought to legalize the stay of Zimbabweans in South Africa (Mbiyozo, 2018; Vanyoro, 2019b). The initial permits were valid for four years (2010–2014) and were replaced by Zimbabwe Special Permit (ZSP) in 2014. Again, these permits were replaced by the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit (ZEP) in 2017, valid for four years until 2021. Vanyoro (2019b) observes that while this process has been commended for regularizing the stay of Zimbabweans in South Africa, these permits have conditions attached to them – they are non-renewable and permit holders do not qualify for permanent residence based on their temporary residence under these permits. Vanyoro (2019b) further points out that

these permits were successfully accessed by only a small number of people, leaving many undocumented.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION

The movement of women to take up employment in the domestic sector and more broadly in the service sectors across the world, highlights the interconnection between migration and social reproduction. Hester and Srnicek (2018: 335) describe social reproduction or reproductive labor as:

... activities that nurture future workers, regenerate the current work force, and maintain those who cannot work – that is, the set of tasks that together maintain and reproduce life, both daily and generationally. Social reproduction consists, broadly speaking, of caring directly for oneself and others (childcare, elder care, healthcare), maintaining physical spaces and organizing resources as part of an indirect process of care for oneself and others (cleaning, shopping, repairing), and species reproduction (bearing children) ... As a theoretical framework, the analysis of social reproduction insists upon the intricate and intimate ways in which historically gendered caring activities are tied to the imperatives of capitalism.

The scope of social reproduction and care has expanded from the site of the family to the global scene with the incorporation of migrant domestic workers (Parreñas, 2000; Kofman, 2012; Kofman and Raghuram, 2015). Parreñas (2000) explains how reproductive labor on an international level has been affected by processes of globalization, commodification and the increased feminization of migration from the Global South to the Global North. Using a case study of Filipino domestic workers in the US and Italy, she refers to a three-tier transfer of reproductive labor among women in receiving and sending countries. That is, middle-class women in developed countries who employ migrant Filipino domestic workers and Filipino domestic workers in the Philippines who lack resources to migrate (employed in migrant domestic workers' families). She argues that this transfer of reproductive labor is a structural relationship among women in a global market, highlighting inequalities based on class, race, gender, and citizenship. Parreñas further asserts that this division of labor is shaped by global capitalism and gender inequalities in both the sending and receiving countries. Thus, gender is a key factor in migration as the employment of migrant women enables women in the destination countries to 'ease their gender constraints' while migrant women relegate their gender roles to other women left behind.

Fudge (2014) also draws linkages between migration and care work in her conceptualization of social reproduction. Fudge argues that immigration, which is controlled by the state, is an important element in social reproduction as it is a

source of labor and regulates the labor market. Fudge notes that in line with the gender division of labor in receiving countries, women migrants are often restricted to traditional occupations, such as domestic and care work, that are precarious – “unstable, marked by low wages, absence of social services and poor working conditions” (Fudge, 2014: 9).

Another concept significant to this study is “transnationalism”, which according to Schiller et al. (1992: ix), refers to the “social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographical, cultural, and political fields”. It involves sustained relations that migrants are involved in, both in the countries of origin and settlement. Migration from a transnational perspective places emphasis on the ways in which migrants “construct and reconstitute simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society” (Schiller et al., 1995: 48). Key characteristics identified in the literature in relation to transnationalism include emphasis on connectedness across the borders through high intensity of exchanges, transactions and activities; social networks and linkages across the border which facilitate migration; hybrid identities as migrants take on multiple identities that combine the sending and destination countries and that transnational activities are linked to globalization (modern communication and transport technologies which enable migrants to maintain social ties) as well as being part of a global capitalist system characterized by inequalities (Crush and McDonald, 2000; Tedeschi et al., 2020).

The concept of transnationalism has been used to understand transformations in the family and household brought about by migration (Boccagni, 2012; Nguyen, 2020). To the extent that transnational migration entails the movement of family members across borders, contemporary migration studies have focused on the formation of transnational families, which Bryceson and Vuorela (2002: 3) describe as “families that live for some time or most of the time separated from each other yet hold together and create ... a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely ‘familyhood’ even across the borders”. Migrant domestic workers are part of transnational families with caring responsibilities in their country of origin and maintain close relations with their families through constant communication and remittances. Studies on transnational families also highlight the changes in how care is defined and provided (Baldassar et al., 2007). The migration of women has brought a focus on gender relations, with scholars such as Salih (2000: 87) arguing that transnationalism is not a “uniform process” but a “complex and varied terrain experienced differently according to gender and class and to their interplay with normative constraints”.

RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

This article utilizes data collected from a qualitative study undertaken in 2018. Data was collected during two periods, from December 2017 to February 2018 for the pilot study while the rest of the data was collected from June to November 2018. A qualitative research design was deemed the most appropriate for addressing the research objectives as it places emphasis on context and lived experiences. A feminist

approach to methodology was adopted as it pays attention to the illumination of women's lives and a focus on the 'open-ended' investigation of women's experiences (DeVault, 1996; Maynard and Purvis, 2013).

Participants in this study were selected in two South African cities – Johannesburg and Pretoria. As urban areas, Pretoria and Johannesburg tend to be favored destinations for internal and foreign migrants who are drawn to these cities in anticipation of employment and economic opportunities. The 2011 census results showed that migrant inflows from outside South Africa were the highest in Gauteng (StatsSA, 2014).

This article draws on data collected from in-depth interviews with two categories of participants: four key informants and 23 care workers. The key informants were owners or managers of domestic worker recruitment agencies in Pretoria and Johannesburg. Such agencies play the role of being the point of contact for both employers who seek domestic help or home-based care services as well as the domestic or care workers seeking placement. Four recruitment agencies were selected through purposive sampling, which is used when selecting cases "with a specific purpose in mind", and is appropriate for specialized populations (Neuman, 2011: 268). The key informants were identified through an online search of domestic worker agency websites. Three were privately-owned businesses while one was a faith-based informal agency. Two of the privately-owned businesses were located in Johannesburg while one was in Pretoria with the faith-based agency being in Johannesburg.

With regards to the care workers, snowball sampling was used to select participants for the study. Snowball sampling was deemed the most appropriate in accessing "concealed" participants (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; Berg, 2009). Migrant care workers in private households represent a "hidden" population that is invisible to the public. Data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interview guides were designed for both categories of the participants.

Care workers selected to participate in the study were working in private households where their responsibilities included providing care for young children up to school-going age or members of the family needing care, such as older people, the frail or the sick. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 50 years. The majority of the participants (21) worked as full-time employees and 18 lived in the employer's household. Two were part-time employees. Fifteen respondents were single, separated or divorced, five were married and three were widowed.

Interviews were conducted mostly during weekends when participants were off-duty and in a range of venues which included parks, food outlets and their places of accommodation, often located in the townships. For the key informants, interviews were held at the agencies' offices. In order to ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used in the write-up and analysis of findings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The migration journey

Women interviewed in this study described the various push and pull factors which motivated their migration. The pull factors were mainly economic, specifically the prospect for jobs in South Africa that could offer better remuneration and hence enhance the women's ability to support their children and other family members back in Zimbabwe. The deterioration in the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe emerged as the major push factor. Reasons highlighted as driving their decision to migrate included lack of jobs and the declining economic situation in Zimbabwe, poor working conditions in the domestic services sector for those who were employed in this sector prior to their migration, as well as caring responsibilities. According to one respondent,

Here in South Africa, it is easy to get jobs, like domestic work jobs are easy to find. It is not as difficult as in other countries like Namibia ... Moreover, in South Africa, the amount of money that we get paid is a bit better. It depends on your employer, but if you look at it, the salaries that we get paid here in South Africa, are generally better. You are able to support your family in Zimbabwe (Chido, Pretoria).

Discussing the respondents' migration journey was a sensitive topic as some respondents were afraid to expose the ways in which they had come into South Africa. It emerged that the migration or documentation status of the respondents changed over the course of their stay in South Africa. Most of the respondents indicated that on their first entry into South Africa they had used passports or emergency travel documents. At the time of the interviews, the documentation status of the respondents was as follows:

- One participant indicated she had acquired permanent residency.
- Five had acquired work visas through the Dispensation of Zimbabwe project, with one highlighting that the permit had expired and she was yet to renew it.
- Three had obtained asylum seekers' permits.
- Fourteen indicated that they were making use of visitors' visas, and 'overstaying'.

Participants highlighted challenges they faced in obtaining the required travel documents, especially in Zimbabwe because of the economic challenges the country faced and also in South Africa. For example, the following quote highlights the transitions that the respondents went through during their stay in South Africa:

Ratidzo: When I first came, I used an ETD (emergency travel document)

because at that time, it was very difficult to obtain a passport and the visas. I had acquired a (visitors') visa when I came.

Interviewer: What about now? ... What about a permit?

Ratidzo: Yes, I do ... I applied in 2010 and got it in 2011 ... At the moment, some of us went to renew [the permits] but they are still being processed. So, we don't know the outcome, whether we will get them or not (Ratidzo, Johannesburg).

Another participant, Tanyaradzwa, recounted her job history in South Africa and she noted that,

I have just been doing domestic work. There are no other jobs that you will find in South Africa other than domestic work. To find jobs in South Africa, you have to have a work permit; they require a lot of documents. We don't have adequate documents (Tanyaradzwa, Johannesburg).

While respondents and key informants suggested that the asylum permit was often disliked and avoided, it remained one of the preferred ways of maintaining one's stay in South Africa as it permits holders to work and study. It is a way of securing long-term employment. However, respondents raised certain challenges to acquiring this type of permit that discouraged other migrants from considering it, including long queues at the Department of Home Affairs offices. Furthermore, asylum permits are renewable every three to six months, which means holders must endure this process often.

Thus, other migrants resorted to the method of sending their passports to be 'processed out'. This phenomenon entails the movement of travel documents, via a third party and at a cost, to have it stamped by a 'connected' border official, to show that the holder has officially left the country while they remain in the Republic (Thebe, 2017; Vanyoro, 2019b; Zack et al., 2019).

The job-seeking journey

The participants highlighted a number of ways in which they found employment, which included through agencies, the 'market' and social networks of relatives and friends who were already in South Africa.

§ Social networks

The most popular method of securing jobs for the respondents in this study was through their networks of relatives and friends who were already living in South Africa, aligning with Zack et al.'s (2019) study of female Zimbabwean migrants in the domestic sector. Employers also made use of these networks of Zimbabwean nationals in South Africa to solicit potential employees in Zimbabwe to come and

work in South Africa. For example, Sifiso from Johannesburg explained her decision to come to South Africa, which was influenced by her social networks, as follows:

I chose to come to South Africa because I had relatives living here already and I asked them to search for jobs for me ... in December 2012, my cousin told me about the job during the Christmas holidays and I got the contact details of the employer and I started communicating with her. I travelled after the 1st of January ... I went to my sister's place and I started work the next day.

De Regt (2010) and Awumbila et al. (2017) highlight several advantages of using social networks in the migration process. De Regt (2010) notes that migrants receive information through their networks, which is useful for helping them to prepare for the new environment and life. Further, she notes that relatives and friends in the destination country will assist new migrants with settling in and adjustment through providing accommodation and information on employment opportunities as well providing support in times of trouble, such as when a job is lost abruptly. Most respondents noted that the reason they chose to come South Africa was because their relatives or friends were already in the country. Many of the respondents noted that relatives and friends had notified them of the job openings while they were still in Zimbabwe. They therefore migrated to take up a position that was already available and did not have to spend any time searching for a job. Other respondents noted that they had asked their relatives residing in South Africa to search for jobs on their behalf, as indicated in Sifiso's quote above. The foregoing can be related to the theorists of transnational migration who highlight the idea of "simultaneous embeddedness" as migrants maintain social ties in the country of origin and destination.

A central issue in the use of social networks is trust. Both employers and employees prefer to use recommendations from within their social networks as a way of finding good employers or domestic workers they can trust, which is vital in care work. Employers leave their children with domestic workers while they are at work during the day. De Regt (2010) points out that for domestic workers, being employed by families recommended by social networks enhances the chances that they would be treated well.

Churches were also a significant element of the social networks, as both employers and job seekers used this channel as a way of advertising, in search of an employee or for a job. For example, one participant, Rufaro indicated that she found her current job through networks from the church that her sister attended. It was not only family and friends who assisted in the search for employment, but also being part of social media groups. Some participants explained that they were part of social media groups in which job openings could be advertised or posted. Thus, social networks were a resource for information on job openings.

§ The ‘market’

The other method of finding jobs was through the ‘market’, which the respondents explained as being areas where “people go and wait, so individuals looking for people to contract, just stop there and they choose the person they want, and then you discuss; if you agree and then you go ...’ (Chido, Pretoria).

The participants explained that there are designated areas where individuals in search of casual work or part-time jobs congregate, such as by the roadside, at major intersections, or at service stations. This method can be risky and dangerous especially in relation to human trafficking. For example, in an informal conversation after the interview in Johannesburg, Abigail referred to an incident in which two women had been picked up by the roadside while they were looking for a job; they disappeared and were later found dead in the area where she lived. This narrative reflects only one aspect of the many vulnerabilities associated with searching for casual jobs in the domestic sector. Another relates to the question of trust, where relying on the ‘market’ to find work posed a risk to employers who would be employing strangers without knowledge of their background or credentials. Respondents indicated that the ‘market’ was one way of securing part-time work as well as to find more than one employer to fill their working week. However, this method presented limited opportunities for negotiating working conditions and remuneration for the employees, as the employers had a wide range of workers to choose from.

§ Recruitment agencies

Only a small number of the participants (five) had made use of private recruitment agencies representing a formal channel of job seeking. Domestic worker recruitment agencies are considered as mediators between employers and domestic workers and often play the role of matching or pairing employers and workers according to specifications set by employers (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Tsikata, 2011). The agencies that participated in this study, referred to as P1, P2, and P3, were privately-owned businesses, while Agency F1 was a faith-based informal employment agency. There are advantages for both employer and employee to use recruitment agencies in contrast to the two methods discussed above. Employers have access to employees with experience and who have been vetted. The owner of Agency P3 in Johannesburg stated:

A lot of the people who hire domestics don't bother to check references and stuff, they just hire them off the street and that's the problem ... so we do all that – we do the reference checking, the interviewing, we do the preliminary work for the customers because they don't have time (or) they don't want to ... We can do police checks if they want (owner, Agency P3, Johannesburg).

The quote above gives a sense of the role of domestic worker agencies and the services

they provide, which are mainly to source the candidates according to the requirements of the employers, as well as to manage the screening process that candidates undertake before they register them. Services provided by private recruitment agencies included facilitating contractual agreements between employers and employees, which provide details on terms of employment as well as remuneration.

Data from the agency officials showed that in the sourcing of prospective candidates, there were variations in terms of the requirements needed for a job seeker to be registered. The key items were a reference letter and proof of identification, while others mentioned experience. For people coming from outside of South Africa, an additional requirement was proof of authorization to legally work in the country. For example, according to an agency owner:

They must have a valid ID or passport or work permit; we don't take asylum papers. So, passport, valid work permit or ID, reference letter – current references ... for at least three years ... (owner, Agency P3, Johannesburg).

Officials at the informal agency reported that they additionally accepted asylum documents for the registration process. Another difference noted in the services provided by the informal agency was that their role was to 'introduce' job seekers to the employers and check if the prospective employees had the required documents. However, they explained that they did not verify the references, a responsibility left to the employers. One of the reasons that could have contributed to this situation, was that the informal agency relied on volunteers in their operations and therefore did not have resources to invest in the process of vetting and verification checks. Some of the reasons cited by agency officials in the privately-owned agencies for not taking asylum papers into consideration, were that:

The problem if they have an asylum [permit], it's only valid for six months ... so they need to go and get it renewed and it gets refused, because it does happen. So, we want them to have a valid work permit and a lot of the residential estates do not take asylum papers ... There are massive penalties, massive, massive ... penalties for employing say for instance a Zimbabwean without a valid work permit ... (manager, Agency P1, Pretoria).

By drawing attention to the limitations of asylum permits, the manager at Agency P1 corroborated some of the challenges raised by the respondents pertaining to acquiring these documents highlighted in earlier sections. Furthermore, agency officials cited documentation issues as one of the major challenges faced by migrant care workers, as narrated by this respondent:

... so, getting all the documentation right is probably a challenge and you know, as we said, we are not prepared to register them if they don't have

permission to work here because the employers that come here expect them to have permission to work here. If not, they can get into trouble; so, I think the challenge of getting permission to work can be an issue. The special permits, like, expired in December last year, so they are busy issuing new ones. But they haven't issued them all, so some people are sitting in the middle with a receipt with no permit. It's difficult for us to register them because we have no way to check if receipts become permits. So, when you get your new permit, we will register you. But you know, sometimes they sit in no-man's land (manager, Agency F1, Johannesburg).

Evidence from the agency officials pointed to the strict requirements, which meant that only a few migrant workers could make use of their services, given that the majority of the care workers did not have the required documents and those with asylum documents were not guaranteed to receive assistance in this process. With regards to the reference letters, Tame (2018) contends that the requirement allows private recruitment agencies to play the role of a gate-keeper. She argues that in order to gain references indicating work experience, migrant women are often subject to exploitation, as they have to endure harsh working conditions before they can access this document. Thus, she argues that reference letters can "limit workers' mobility in the labor market" (Tame, 2018: 104).

Documentation and access to jobs

The majority of workers pointed to the disadvantages of not having the required documents, particularly in salary negotiations. The extract below from a conversation with one of the respondents, Rufaro, and her sister, highlighted the challenges faced by migrant women in the course of seeking employment. Unlike Rufaro, her sister had managed to acquire the special permit. Rufaro's sister shared her experience:

It limits their opportunities because, for example with me, I have experience of working for different employers of different races. So, what employers do – for someone who does not have the work papers, it's a disadvantage, firstly, with regards to the salary. Because they know you don't have the papers and if they decide to pay you R2000 (US\$118), because you are desperate for the job, you will agree. I have a permit right now; I can negotiate with the employer. If they say, "I can pay you R250 or R300 (US\$15-18) per day", I can negotiate for more money, you see. So, it's a disadvantage to them because they don't have the papers ... Also, [regarding] the areas where you find employment – there are areas where they refuse asylum papers; it's either a work permit or ID, you see, so it's a very big disadvantage.

As Rufaro's sister relates, women without the required work documents are disadvantaged in terms of job opportunities as well as salary negotiations because

of their status. The above excerpt highlights that a number of factors come into play, such as nationality, migrant status, race, class, and gender, which are interlinked with the disadvantage of the care worker. This further highlights their vulnerable positioning in the labor market.

Participants highlighted that without work visas, they found jobs that received very low remuneration. For instance, one participant, Vimbai, highlighted her frustration after she realized that without a work visa, she was securing only positions where she would be paid R1500 (US\$88). Under such circumstances, some migrant women might be pushed to take drastic measures such as using another person's documents to secure employment in the hope of increasing their chances of securing positions that offer higher remuneration and better working conditions. This increases their vulnerability as they risk losing the job, if their fraudulent actions were exposed. Thus, care workers would sometimes confide in their employers about their migrant status, depending on whether they had developed a relationship of trust. In consequence, migrant workers found themselves dependent on their employers in order to maintain their jobs as well as for protection. This emphasizes how the domestic sector is extremely privatized and informalized. It links to Griffin's (2011) study on Lesotho migrant workers in South Africa, as she notes that domestic workers were dependent on their employers to protect them from state officials as they feared deportation. Being dependent on their employers highlights their vulnerability to exploitation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that despite the significant presence of Zimbabwean women in the domestic services sector in South Africa, the majority of them are working without the proper documents, which has implications for how they secure employment and the conditions they work under thereafter. In terms of migration processes, it emerged that most of the women entered the country legally using visitors' visas. Only a few managed to subsequently acquire work visas or asylum permits. The findings confirm Fish's (2013) observations that migrant domestic workers face barriers in terms of accessing the legal right to work and leave many of them with an undocumented status. They are exposed to conditions that infringe on their rights; they are at risk of exploitation and abuse as well as living in fear of deportation (Fish, 2013: 240). In addition, Fish assert that, because of their undocumented status, migrant domestic workers are afraid of approaching government institutions for the protection of their rights.

The findings also show that unlike in South-North global care chains where migration is facilitated either by the state through bilateral agreements or temporary labor migration programs as well as through recruitment agencies that facilitate the processing of work visas, employment contracts and travel fees, the migration of Zimbabwean women to South Africa is 'informalized' and not regulated. The women typically make their own plans to migrate (Zack et al., 2019) and, in line

with the concept of transnationalism, social networks play an important role in facilitating the process of migration. This is in contrast to other migration flows such as those from Africa to the Middle East where domestic workers rely on recruitment agencies and brokers, some operated under government-provided guidelines, to obtain employment (Laiboni, 2020). This ensures that the migration process is more formalized and potentially assists in protecting the rights of migrant care workers.

Without legal documentation, migrant care workers cannot seek employment through formal channels such as recruitment agencies; officials of such agencies indicated that they could only register migrant workers who had valid and legitimate work visas. For these 'overstayers' as well as for women still back in Zimbabwe, using social networks, as stated above, is the most common method of finding employment. As observed by Gurung (2009), domestic work falls within the informal labor market and hiring processes are usually through the employers' and employees' social networks and by word of mouth. She argues that in such cases, there is a power imbalance, as the employer has control over the hiring as well as the working conditions, adding that "employers can change their work policies and rules at any time without consultation with the workers" (Gurung, 2009: 385). When employers are aware of the migrant's illegal status, they often have more control and discretion in terms of employment conditions as well as remuneration. Thus, compared to those jobs secured through recruitment agencies, jobs acquired through social networks do not offer protection to care workers. Agencies, for example, insist upon a written contract, which is used to regulate the employment relationship. Formal contracts also facilitate salary negotiations and therefore play a key role in ensuring that care workers' rights are protected.

The overall migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa is guided by regional instruments such as the 2003 SADC Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights in SADC, which seeks to "promote labour policies, practices and measures which facilitate labour mobility" and "to promote the establishment and harmonization of social security systems". In 2013, the regional body launched the SADC Labour Migration Action Plan under which the SADC Labour Migration Policy Framework (2014) was developed. The main objective of this framework is to "promote the sound management of intra-regional labour migration for the benefit of both the sending and receiving country". Through the development of national labour migration policies, the SADC Labour Migration Policy Framework seeks to ensure that all types of migrant workers are protected against discrimination at the workplace and to promote the portability of social security benefits. To meet this requirement, the South African Department of Labour was, at the time of writing of this article, developing a Draft National Labour Migration Policy to be implemented in 2020.

This study has highlighted that South Africa's strict migration policy, which continues to focus on skilled labor, is not comprehensive enough to cover all types of labor migrants and that there is a need for policies tailored for different categories

of migrant workers. The study recommends the introduction of less stringent and affordable visa options for care workers, as proper documentation is important for the protection of the rights of the care workers.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, B. 2000. *Doing the dirty work?: The global politics of domestic labour*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Atkinson, R. and Flint, J. 2001. Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social Research Update*, 33(1): 1-4.
- Awumbila, M., Teye, J.K. and Yaro, J.A. 2017. Social networks, migration trajectories and livelihood strategies of migrant domestic and construction workers in Accra, Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 52(7): 982-996. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909616634743>
- Baldassar, L., Baldock, C.V. and Wilding, R. 2007. *Families caring across borders: Migration, ageing and transnational caregiving*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Berg, B.L. 2009. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, 7th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Boccagni, P. 2012. Practising motherhood at a distance: Retention and loss in Ecuadorian transnational families. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(2): 261-277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.646421>
- Bryceson, D.F. and Vuorela, U. 2002. Transnational families in the twenty-first century. In Bryceson, D. and Vuorela, U. (eds.), *The transnational family: New European frontiers and global networks*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cox, R. 2016. Migrant domestic workers and the globalization of childcare. In Ansell, N., Klocker, N. and Skelton, T. (eds.), *Geographies of global issues: Change and threat*. Singapore: Springer Science + Business Media Singapore.
- Crush, J. and McDonald, D.A. 2000. Transnationalism, African immigration, and new migrant spaces in South Africa: An introduction. *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 34(1): 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2000.10751182>
- Crush, J., Tawodzera, G., Chikanda, A., Ramachandran, S. and Tevera, D. 2017. South Africa case study: The double crisis – Mass migration from Zimbabwe and xenophobic violence in South Africa. Vienna: International Centre for Migration Policy Development, and Waterloo, ON: Southern African Migration Programme.
- De Regt, M. 2010. Ways to come, ways to leave: Gender, mobility, and il/legality among Ethiopian domestic workers in Yemen. *Gender and Society*, 24(2): 237-260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243209360358>
- DeVault, M.L. 1996. Talking back to sociology: Distinctive contributions of feminist methodology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22(1): 29-50.
- Fish, J.N. 2013. Rights across borders: Policies, protections and practices for migrant domestic workers in South Africa. In Du Toit, D. (ed.), *Exploited, undervalued*,

and essential: Domestic workers and the realisation of their rights. Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press.

- Fudge, J. 2011. Global care chains, employment agencies, and the conundrum of jurisdiction: Decent work for domestic workers in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 23(1): 235-264. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.23.1.235>
- Fudge, J. 2014. Feminist reflections on the scope of labour law: Domestic work, social reproduction, and jurisdiction. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 22(1): 1-23.
- Ghaddar, A., Khandaqji, S. and Ghattas, J. 2018. Justifying abuse of women migrant domestic workers in Lebanon: The opinion of recruitment agencies. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, in press.
- Griffin, L. 2010. *Borderwork: 'Illegality', un-bounded labour and the lives of Basotho migrant domestic workers*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne.
- Griffin, L. 2011. Unravelling rights: 'Illegal' migrant domestic workers in South Africa. *South African Review of Sociology*, 42(2): 83-101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2011.582349>
- Gurung, S.H. 2009. Nepali female migrants and informalization of domestic care work: Service or servitude? *Journal of Workplace Rights*, 14(3): 375-396.
- Hengeveld, M. 2015. *South Africa's domestic workers: Invisible labor in plain sight* [Online]. Available at: <https://africasacountry.com/2015/03/south-african-domestic-workers-bonded-labor-in-plain-sight> Accessed on 29 June 2020.
- Hester, H. and Srnicek, N. 2018. The crisis of social reproduction and the end of work. In Einstein, A. (ed.), *The age of perplexity: Rethinking the world we knew*. Barcelona: Fundacion BBVA.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. 2001. *Doméstica: Immigrant workers cleaning and caring in the shadows of affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). 2015. *ILO global estimates in migrant workers: Results and Methodology: Special focus on migrant domestic workers*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). 2018. *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Isike, E. 2017. An analysis of African female migration to South Africa: The case of Mozambican female migrants in Mpumalanga. *Gender and Behaviour*, 15(2): 8545-8559.
- Jinnah, Z. 2020. Negotiated precarity in the global south: A case study of migration and domestic work in South Africa. *Studies in Social Justice*, 14(1): 210-227. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v2020i14.1971>
- King-Dejarddin, A. 2019. *The social construction of migrant care work: At the intersection of care, migration and gender*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

- Kiwanuka, M., Jinnah, Z. and Hartman-Pickerill, B. 2015. *Getting the house in order: Foreign migrant workers in the domestic work sector in South Africa*. MiWORC Report No 10. Johannesburg: African Centre of Migration and Society, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Kofman, E. 2012. Rethinking care through social reproduction: Articulating circuits of migration. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 19(1): 142-162. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxr030>
- Kofman, E. and Raghuram, P. 2015. *Gendered migrations and global social reproduction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Laiboni, N. 2020. 'A job at any cost': *Experiences of African women migrant domestic workers in the Middle East*. Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women and International Domestic Workers Federation.
- Maynard, M. and Purvis, J. 2013. *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective*. Oxon and New York: Francis and Taylor.
- Mbiyozo, A.-N. 2018. Gender and migration in South Africa: Talking to women migrants. ISS Southern Africa Report No 16, pp. 1-36.
- Mkhize, H.B. (2017) Statement by Minister Mkhize on the closure of the Zimbabwean Special Permits (ZSP) and the opening of the New Zimbabwean Exemption Permits (ZEP). Available at: <http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/statements-speeches/1034-statement-by-minister-mkhize-on-the-closure-of-the-zimbabwean-special-permit-zsp-and-the-opening-of-the-new-zimbabwean-exemption-permit-zep> Accessed on
- Neuman, W.L. 2011. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 7th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Nguyen, C.H. 2020. No one size fits all: Key debates in transnationalism research. *Essays in Education*, 26(1): 3.
- Parreñas, R.S. 2000. Migrant Filipina domestic workers and the international division of reproductive labor. *Gender and Society*, 14(4): 560-580. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124300014004005>
- Parreñas, R.S. 2017. The indenture of migrant domestic workers. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 113-127. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wsq.2017.0031>
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). 1998. Refugees Act 130 of 1998. Government of the Republic of South Africa. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2002. Immigration Act 13 of 2002. Government of the Republic of South Africa. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Romero, M. 2018. Reflections on globalized care chains and migrant women workers. *Critical Sociology*, 44(7-8): 1179-1189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920517748497>
- Salih, R. 2000. Towards an understanding of gender and transnationalism: Moroccan

- migrant women's movements across the Mediterranean. *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures*, 9(2): 75-91.
- Schiller, N.G., Basch, L. and Blanc, C.S. 1995. From immigrant to transmigrant: Theorizing transnational migration. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68(1): 48-63. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3317464>
- Schiller, N.G., Basch, L. and Blanc-Szanton, C. 1992. Transnationalism: A new analytic framework for understanding migration. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 645(1): 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1992.tb33484.x>
- Southern African Development Community (SADC). 2003. Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights in SADC. Southern African Development Community. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3tQd2mn> Accessed on 24 April 2021.
- Southern African Development Community (SADC). 2014. SADC Labour Migration Policy Framework. Southern African Development Community. Available at: <https://bit.ly/32NIMWs> Accessed on 24 April 2021.
- Statistics South Africa (StatsSA). 2014. *Census 2011: Provincial Profile: Gauteng*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.
- Statistics South Africa (StatsSA). 2015. *Census 2011: Migration Dynamics in South Africa*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.
- Statistics South Africa (StatsSA). 2019. *Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 3: 2019*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.
- Tame, B. 2018. Establishing and performing an intimate work culture through identity niching in South Africa's domestic sector. In Monteiro, B. and Garba, F. (eds.), *Masons and maids: Class, gender and ethnicity in migrant experiences*. SSIIM UNESCO Chair, pp. 93-111.
- Tedeschi, M., Vorobeve, E. and Jauhiainen, J.S. 2020. Transnationalism: Current debates and new perspectives. *GeoJournal*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-020-10271-8>
- Thebe, V. 2017. 'Two steps forward, one step back': Zimbabwean migration and South Africa's regularising programme (the ZDP). *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 18(2): 613-622. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-016-0495-8>
- Tsikata, D. 2011. Employment agencies and the regulation of domestic workers in Ghana: Institutionalizing informality? *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 23(1): 213-234. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.23.1.213>
- Vanyoro, K.P. 2019a. *Regularising labour migration of Zimbabwean domestic workers in South Africa*. Johannesburg: African Centre for Migration and Society, University of the Witwatersrand. Available at: <http://www.migration.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Regularising-labour-migration-of-Zim-domestic-workers-in-SA-Issue-Brief-15-July-2019.pdf>. Accessed on 13 April 2021.

- Vanyoro, K.P. 2019b. *Zimbabwean migrant domestic worker activism in South Africa*. Migrating Out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium. Brighton: University of Sussex.
- Weda, Z. and De Villiers, R. 2019. Migrant Zimbabwean teachers in South Africa: Challenging and rewarding issues. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 20(4): 1013-1028. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-00649-6>
- World Health Organization (WHO). 2017. *Women on the move: Migration, care work and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Yeates, N. 2005. *Global care chains: A critical introduction*. Global Migration Perspectives. Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration.
- Zack, T., Matshaka, S., Moyo, K. and Vanyoro, K.P. 2019. *My way? The circumstances and intermediaries that influence the migration decision-making of female Zimbabwean domestic workers in Johannesburg*. Migrating Out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium Working Paper 57. Brighton: Migrating Out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium, University of Sussex.