

The 'Accompanying Spouse Dependent Visa Status': Challenges and Constraints Faced by Zimbabwean Immigrant Women in Integration into South Africa's Formal Labour Market

Authors : Rujeko Samantha Chimukuche

Abstract : Introduction: Transboundary migration at both regional and continental levels has become the defining feature of the 21st century. The recent global migration crisis due to economic strife and war brings back to the fore an old age problem, but with fresh challenges. Migration and forced displacement are issues that require long-term solutions. In South Africa, for example, whilst much attention has been placed on xenophobic attacks and other issues at the nexus of immigrant and indigenous communities, the limited focus has been placed on the integration, specifically formal labour integration of immigrant communities and the gender inequalities that are prevalent. Despite noble efforts by South Africa, hosting several immigrants, several challenges arise in integrating the migrants into society as it is often difficult to harmonize the interests of indigenous communities and those of foreign nationals. This research study has aimed to fill in the gaps by analyzing how stringent immigration and visa regulations prevent skilled migrant women spouses from employment, which often results in several societal vices, including domestic abuse, minimum or no access to important services such as healthcare, education, social welfare among others. Methods: Using a qualitative approach, the study analyzed South Africa migration and labour policies in terms of mainstreaming the gender needs of skilled migrant women. Secondly, the study highlighted the migratory experiences and constraints of skilled Zimbabwean women migrant spouses in South Africa labour integration. The experiences of these women have shown the gender inequalities of the migratory policies. Thirdly, Zimbabwean women's opportunities and/or challenges in integration into the South African formal labour market were explored. Lastly, practical interventions to support the integration of skilled migrant women spouses into South Africa's formal labour market were suggested. Findings: Key findings show that gender dynamics are pivotal in migration patterns and the mainstreaming of gender in migration policies. This study, therefore, contributed to the fields of gender and migration by examining ways in which gender rights of skilled migrant women spouses can be incorporated in labour integration policy making.

Keywords : accompanying spouse visa, gender-migration, labour-integration, Zimbabwean women

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