

Women and Migration-Challenges and Constraints – A South African Perspective

Kalpana HIRALAL

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Female migration over the decades has become a common feature in most regions. Many women face many challenges in their new environment in terms of assimilation and accommodation. This paper documents the narratives of immigrant women who have been victims of domestic violence and explores how immigration related factors such as xenophobia, language, unemployment and lack of familial support hinder their attempts to seek help thus making settlement and assimilation in the new environment particularly challenging. Many are imprisoned in marriages and relationships of domestic abuse. This paper locates the argument in the context of intersectionality, that race, class, ethnicity, religion and gender are important categories of analysis to understand the complexities women's immigration challenges. Findings of this paper will contribute to new knowledge in the context of gender and migration amongst immigrant groups in South Africa.

Keywords: immigrant women, Durban, domestic violence, xenophobia, culture, gender.

1. INTRODUCTION

The arrival of immigrants to South Africa from Europe, Africa and Asia in the late 19th and 20th centuries has altered the demographic landscape of South Africa. Women formed an integral part of the migration process – arriving as labourers, refugees, independent migrants and undocumented migrants. Jonathan Crush states that migration history in Southern Africa is “one of the most researched and well-documented academic fields in the region” (Cited in Vale 2003:104). However, traditional analysis of migration have often been male centred with women perceived as and treated as adjuncts to men, because they came as part of family migration. Phrases such as ‘migrants and their families’ or ‘male migrants, their wives and children’ are common (Hiralal 2013; Hiralal 2014). According to Cohen (1997), many studies of migration have dealt with women as a residual category, as those “left behind”. Where they crossed a border, women have generally been treated as dependent or family members. They were effectively the baggage of male workers. However, even historically, we are beginning to turn up evidence that women were more independent actors than what was previously thought (Cohen 1997 cited in Dodson 1998: 7). Female migration has been “hidden from history” and feminist scholars have underscored the importance of gender analysis. According to Chant and

Radcliffe (1992), “gender-differentiated population movement may be significant in a whole range of ways to societies undergoing developmental change” (cited in Dodson 1998: 8). During the second half of the century, there has been an increase of global female migration. In 1960 women constituted 35 million of the 75 million of the “global migrant stock”, in 2005 94.5 million of the 191 million global migrants (49%) were women (Lefko-Everett 2007: 4). Thus feminist analysis has focused on the “feminisation of migration” seeking to make gender an important category of analysis. Studies on migrant women have sought to locate the analysis in the context of identity, agency, livelihoods, and employment. Early studies have largely portrayed the vulnerability of women, who laboured under poor conditions and who lacked choices. Women were perceived as passive participants in the migration process without collective or individual agency or social status. Feminist approaches to migration have challenged traditional theories that have sought to portray migrants through conventional economic models responding to macro-level socio-economic changes. Feminist studies, particularly of the contemporary period, have located their argument within intersectionality theory seeking to show ways in which gender intersects with race, class and identity to illuminate a wide range of women’s experiences in the migration process. The new gendered perspectives have sought to highlight female immigrants’ agency in different geographical settings. Women are no longer seen as passive victims and ‘dependants’ but as principal wage earners and head of households in the migration process (Nolin 2006: 5). In addition, new studies have sought to interrogate the notion of “gender” in migration studies. In their edited collection on *Gender and Migration*, Palmary et al. (2010: 1–2) highlight the importance of understanding the complexity and intersections of gender and mobility and its overall meanings:

[I]n this collection we aim not so much to ‘add’ gender to the existing migration research taking place globally, but rather to reflect upon *how* gender has become a preoccupation when thinking about migration. As such, we comment on the absences, silences and exclusions of understandings of gender that have become part of the production of knowledge about migration whilst also offering new analytic starting points from thinking through the connections. [. . .] we are concerned with the meanings attached to different kinds of migrants, different kinds of movements and different motivations for moving, and how these meanings shape the kinds of support, or alternatively (symbolic or literal) violence – including non-response-assigned to their ‘mobility’.

Of recent, there have been studies documenting women’s agency in the migration process (Bozzoli and Nkotsie 1991; Kihatso 2010, Kiwanuka 2010). Scholars such as Mahler and Pessar (2001) have sought to illuminate women’s experiences within a conceptual model they call “gendered geographies of power”, which as they argue, aims “to capture our understanding that gender

operates simultaneously on multiple *spatial and social* scales (e.g., the body, the family, the state) across transnational terrains”. (Mahler and Pessar 2001: 445). In other words, it is within these social settings or transnational spaces that gender identities and gender relations can be reconfigured or re-affirmed (Mahler and Pessar 2001: 445; Dahinden 2005).

James Clifford (1994: 313–4) alludes to this dialectic nature of gender relations in the migration process. As he argues: “on the one hand, maintaining connections with homelands, with kinship networks, and with religious and cultural traditions may renew patriarchal structures. On the other, new roles and demands, new political spaces, are opened by diaspora interactions”. South African historiography studies on women immigrants both from a historical and contemporary perspective have provided new and interesting insights into the complexities of migration at different historical junctures. The studies by Beall (1982), Parle (1995), Erlank (1995, 1996) and Van-Helten et al. (1983) have examined the lives of middle class settler women and their experiences in the Cape Colony, Transvaal and Natal. Erlank (1995) examines the lives of settler women through discourse analysis revealing their hardships, while Van-Helten et al. locate their discussion in the context of race and nationalism. Van-Helten et al. state that the emigration of women from Britain to the Transvaal was dictated by nationalism, a desire to perpetuate Victorian notions of domesticity and motherhood, whilst Parle and Beall examine settler women in Natal in the context of motherhood, social control and their contributions to the colonial economy. My own research examines the lives of non-indentured or Free Indian women, known as “passenger” women, the “left behind” immigrants – women who stayed behind in their native homeland whilst their spouses travelled abroad seeking new livelihoods- in the Indian Ocean migration network (Hiralal 2013, Hiralal 2014). Contemporary studies on women immigrants have challenged the dichotomies of victims/victor and visible/invisible categories that seek to “pigeonhole women in either one or the other category” (Kihatso 2007:400). According to Kihatso (2007), there needs to be a greater understanding of the complexities of gendered migration, particularly of women’s daily lives. She states, “women have agency in the migration process, they actively participate in making decisions to move, enter relationships that have strategic benefit and, in some cases, consider themselves less vulnerable than me.” (Kihatso, 2007:417).

Whilst there is no dearth of studies regarding immigrant women, some aspects of migration are yet to be explored. Scholarship on domestic violence on immigrant women and how immigrant specific factors add to their vulnerable status is still limited. Existing studies globally have highlighted how immigrant women are often trapped in abusive relationships largely through migration policy, language impediment, lack of finance and cultural and social isolation. For example, Dutton et al. (2000) have shown how amongst the Latinos immigrant community, their partner’s violence accentuated after their migration to the United States. Orloff et al. (1995) and Orloff and Garcia (2013) have also alluded to the differences of domestic violence between immigrants and non-

immigrants. Orloff et al. (1995), and Orloff and Garcia (2013) argue that immigrant women are often subjected to higher rates of domestic violence than non-immigrants in the United States largely through the former's limited access to legal and social services. Kallivayalil (2010) in his study amongst South Asian women immigrants to the United States, argues that gender violence is shaped by specific cultural norms (gender roles and patriarchal ideologies) and their experiences in their new environment.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the literature on domestic violence is equally limiting. Kistner (2003) states that "from the international literature, we know that women migrants and refugees are highly vulnerable to both gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS, however, little is known about the situation of refugee women in South Africa" (2003: 71). Despite the limitation of literature there are few studies that have highlighted domestic violence in the migration process. For example, Monica Kiwanuka's work is a significant attempt to understand the intersections of migration and gender violence. Her study examines gender violence in the context of immigration policies and unequal power relations. As she states, "indirectly, the state functioned to fuel intimate partner violence among migrant women through policies related to immigration legislation that are aimed at policing and deporting undocumented migrants in South Africa and that limit access to some essential services in the absence of legal documentation" (Kiwanuka 2010: 177). This paper documents the narratives of immigrant women who have been victims of domestic violence and explores how migration related factors such as xenophobia, language barriers (inability to speak English), unemployment and lack of familial support hinder their attempts to seek help thus making settlement and assimilation in the new environment particularly challenging. The paper locates the argument in the context of intersectionality, in that race, class, ethnicity, religion and gender are important categories of analysis to understand the complexities of women's migration challenges.

2. FEMALE IMMIGRANTS TO SOUTH AFRICA

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, there has been a significant increase in the number of international migrants and refugees from other African countries and to a lesser extent from South Asia to South Africa. Female migration has increased steadily in Africa. Migration is no longer male centred, "in the past, women in Southern Africa were often prohibited from migrating. Today, with an increasing number of African women migrants, traditionally male-dominated patterns of migration are changing". (South African Institute of International Affairs, 2008). Most immigrants to South Africa hail from various parts of Africa, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, and to a lesser extent Pakistan, India and China. Both "push" and "pull" factors, such as political instability, poverty, famine, unemployment, has

led to many international and internal migrants, including women from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Somalia, Nigeria and Burundi to seek sustainable livelihoods and political stability in South Africa. For many migrants, South Africa, is a prime destination in the region, perceived by many as being relatively peaceful and economically stable. On arrival, many are likely to settle in urban areas where employment opportunities exist. However, for many migrants, including women, the socio-economic reality in South Africa is very different to what they imagined. As studies by Kihatso (2007), Kallivayalil (2010) and Orlaff (1995) have revealed, there are enormous challenges for women migrants who are more likely to be disadvantaged by their migration experience compared to their male counterparts.

While South Africa is an increasingly popular destination for migrants in numeric terms, it is often an intimidating and unstable destination, where women migrants suffer violence, overt hostility and social exclusion, as well as economic exploitation (SAIIA 2008). Many female immigrants are disadvantaged by low literacy levels, lack of funds, and unemployment. Many struggle to find decent work and thus enter the labour market as semi-skilled or unskilled workers. The informal sector has been an important source of livelihood for many women immigrants. Many are likely to work as hawkers, street traders and vendors (Dodson 1998: 10; SAIIA 2008; Hiralal 2015: 331–344). Women in particular find it difficult to navigate the new and complex spaces they find themselves in: embodying multiple identities – wives, mothers and women – they face many challenges. Many live in poor overcrowded living conditions. They have difficulty in securing formal employment and are subject to police harassment, sexual abuse and patriarchal oppression. Collectively these factors have, to some extent, exacerbated domestic violence amongst some women immigrants. It is the lives of these women that I seek to examine and document.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study I primarily study life histories to examine issues of gender, migration and domestic violence. Life histories are significant and particularly useful in investigating a topic that has been under-explored and under-theorised. In addition, they provide a deeper insight into the subjective and lived experiences of women, thereby providing a platform for women's voices. Oral histories also have the potential of creating meaningful stories of one's personal experiences. According to Patai, "telling one's life story involves a rationalization of the past and leads into an inevitable present" (Patai 1988: 147). In other words, the person selects certain events, incidents and recollections which are communicated in a specific way during the interview process. Thus memory is influenced by the circumstances of the situation and this impacts on one's life story. In their study on Black women and mental

illness, Sosulski et al. (2010) highlight the importance of life histories and feminist narrative analysis. As they argue, “these interpretive methods help to holistically describe the study participants’ experiences—both beneficial and harmful—and identify the strategies they use to pursue their goals and enhance their lives while living with severe mental illness” (p. 30).

However, some scholars, like Kihatso (2010) are of the opinion that oral histories do not necessarily capture the holistic experiences of immigrant women. Kihatso in her research has alluded to the importance of “visual methodologies in social science research” (Kihatso 2010: 141) in understanding the complexity and dynamics of gender and migration. She argues that the “limits of words”, “language barriers” and the fact that “no words *in any oral language* can articulate women’s feelings, memories and ideas. In other words, there are situations and contexts that cannot be expressed or articulated orally.” (Kihatso 2010: 142) According to Kihatso (2010), visual methodologies provide new insights into the daily lives of immigrant women which are not captured in oral histories. She advocates the use of photographs taken by research participants which has “provided the opportunity for reflecting upon the research process, and rethinking power relations between researcher and ‘subjects’” (Kihatso 2010: 161–162).

Whilst Kihatso has provided alternate methodologies to document the lives of immigrant women in Johannesburg, this study is based primarily on the life histories of four migrant women from Zimbabwe, India, Mozambique and Nigeria living in South Africa. These nationalities are visible in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and many have made this province their home. Interviews were conducted between November 2014 and April 2015 in central Durban. A snowball technique was used to identify participants. I contacted women immigrants via telephone and emails. I told colleagues about my study asking them to share this information with possible participants. Participants also referred me to their friends and family to participate in the study. I chose to interview women who had lived in KZN for more than 5 years to formulate ideas of their hardships in South Africa in the context of domestic violence and migration specific challenges. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in English. An interpreter was used when interviews were conducted in a foreign language such as Hindi, Shona and Yoruba. I also became a participant observer to gain insight into the social and economic milieu of these women’s lives. The data collected for this study was audio-taped on a digital recorder, transcribed, translated and analyzed. For reasons of anonymity, I have chosen to change the names of the respondents. Below are detailed profiles of the women in the study, followed by an analysis of the data, which provide insights on domestic violence amongst immigrant women in the migration process.

4. PROFILES OF WOMEN

Tia is a 25-year-old woman from Zimbabwe. She came to South Africa in search of greener pastures. As she mentions, “life is certainly better in South Africa”. The country she adds has better infrastructure than Zimbabwe in terms of electricity, food supply and seeking a better livelihood. Her brother already resided in Durban so she joined him once he settled in the country. He first arrived in Johannesburg but later moved to Durban due to better job prospects. Tia completed only her O levels and is fluent in English and Ndebele. She has no tertiary education, and this was a serious impediment in her acquiring employment. She works as a domestic worker three times a week earning less than a thousand rands. She fell in love with a Congolese man and married him six months after they met. However, three months into the marriage he started to physically abuse her. Initially lack of finances prevented her from leaving her husband. However, after gaining employment she left him. Whilst still living with her spouse, he paid for the rent of their small apartment, food, electricity and her cell phone bill. She currently lives with a friend and shares living expenses (Interview, 22 November 2014)

Rita is a 35-year-old woman who came to South Africa from Nigeria about 7 years ago. She sought a better life here as life in Nigeria was “very difficult”. According to Rita: “Life is better in South Africa. The infrastructure here is better than Nigeria. I left Zimbabwe for South Africa because of the high unemployment rate in my country”. Rita also complained about the lack of infrastructure in her home country, in terms of electricity, water, rampant corruption, lack of medical facilities and political instability. As she describes, she claimed asylum status “because to get a working permit is very tedious and very, very expensive”. On arrival she married a fellow Nigerian. She faced many challenges. Her Nigerian spouse was abusive which further aggravated her immigration hardships. She finally managed to leave her husband and start a new life. She describes: “You start all over again, so it is not very easy. I subsequently sought a salon job to pay my house rent and now I am progressing.” (Interview, 5 February 2015)

Sarah a 40-year-old with two children arrived with her husband from India 10 years ago and settled in Durban. Her parents and her entire family (siblings, aunts and uncles) however reside in India. Her husband’s friend (also from India) ran a DVD retail store in Central Durban and offered him employment. Sarah was not keen to leave her family in India and travel to a foreign land but she was persuaded by her husband that life was really good in Durban. In addition, their children would be well secured. On arrival, they rented a small flat in Grey Street. Sarah was discouraged from finding employment by her husband who believed her “job” was to nurture the home and family. Sarah suffered domestic violence as a result of her spouse’s intermittent use of drugs. She had very few friends in Durban and felt powerless and isolated in a strange country (Interview, 15 February 2015).

Beauty is a 30-year-old woman from Mozambique. She arrived with her husband 6 years ago and settled in Cato Manor, near Durban. Lack of employment opportunities back home, and food shortages led to them seeking a better life in South Africa. They left their two children with relatives in Mozambique as it was far too expensive to bring them to South Africa. Beauty's husband found employment as a welder whilst she works as domestic servant for a local family. Later, Beauty's sister arrived in Durban and also settled nearby Cato Manor. For Beauty domestic abuse was common even in her home country. However, she adds that it increased after their arrival to Durban. Her husband took to selling drugs because of lack of employment. She fears leaving her husband as they have two children and he threatened her with not gaining access to them. Her employers are aware of the domestic abuse she suffers and even tried to help her, but she refused. She states that her husband will get "better" and "things will be ok". She defends her partner's abusive actions towards her due to money issues, "things are bad now but they will improve when his income improves and then he will not resort to violence" (Interview, 2 April 2015).

5. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Given the challenges and constraints of migration, domestic violence is widespread amongst immigrant women. Studies in North America, Europe and Africa has shown the linkages between migration and domestic violence in the context of class, gender and culture. Changes in gender roles in the migration process often challenges power relations making women more vulnerable to abuse. Studies by Kudat (1982:298) has shown that Turkish women immigrants in Germany whilst active in the labour market carry out their reproductive tasks within the home to maintain the traditional gender status quo so as to not threaten male authority within the home. Sattopima's study (2004, cited in Kiwanuka 2008:37) highlights the links between poverty and domestic violence. In her study of Burundian women in the Tanzanian camps she states that women attribute domestic violence to their spouse's inability to fulfil his traditional role of provider and protector under refugee status. With regard to North America, a study by Tjaden and Thoennes (2000: 5–23) has shown that approximately 60% of immigrant Korean women in the United States were subject to domestic violence, and according to Dutton et al. (2000: 248–300) married immigrant women are susceptible to higher levels of domestic violence than unmarried women. Kiwanuka's study of the effect of migration on urban migrant women and domestic violence in Johannesburg and Pretoria in South Africa has shown how xenophobia, legal status of women immigrants, poverty, unemployment and immigration policies intersected with gender to increase women's vulnerability to domestic violence (Kiwanuka 2008). The women in this study were all victims of domestic violence. For some women domestic violence was

intermittent, whilst for other women it occurred on a weekly basis. Abuse took several forms: verbal, physical and sexual. Immigration related factors such as language barriers, unemployment, their immigration status and lack of familial support aided their immigration difficulties. These factors will be discussed below.

6. FAMILIAL ISOLATION

The women in this study did, to some extent, experience familial isolation. Sarah and Beauty arrived with their spouses in search of better lives. Their families, their parents, their siblings and relatives were still in their country of origin. In times of hardships it became increasingly difficult for these women to seek help and thus made them more vulnerable to domestic violence. Unfamiliar social settings, lack of funds, fears of social ostracism and community support were factors that mitigated women from leaving their husband. Similar studies of South Asian and Latino immigrant women in the US have shown how lack of familial support and support networks have made women powerless and vulnerable to domestic violence (Abraham 1998). For Beauty, who hailed from Mozambique, having a sister in Durban was a “huge help”. When Beauty’s husband became abusive, she would seek the assistance of her sister who lived close by. Her sister provided her with money, shelter and food. Studies on immigrant women and refugees in Tanzania and Burundi have illustrated to some extent how foreign aid programs act as a deterrent in raising community awareness on gender-based violence and provide counselling and medical care for victims of sexual and domestic violence (Human Rights Watch 2000). Rita was forced to stay in her abusive relationship, as she felt trapped. She has no family or relatives who could assist her. Later after securing employment on a part-time basis as a domestic servant she finally left her abusive partner. Seeking help was not easy as many locals were unfriendly, largely due to the xenophobic attitudes that persist against foreigners.

7. XENOPHOBIA

The hostile environment of the host country further contributed to immigration challenges of assimilation. In South Africa this has been most noticeable in the outbreak of intermittent xenophobic attacks, particularly on African migrants, since 2008. South Africa is home to more than 3 million foreigners. In 2014 there were 230.000 asylum seekers and over 65. 500 refugees in South Africa. Refugees primarily originated from countries such as Somalia, Angola and Ethiopia (Meny-Gibert and Chiumia 2016). There is also considerable migration from Somalia and Ethiopia. Most labour migrants hail from Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. In KwaZulu-Natal where this study

was conducted, foreign born workers constitute 1% of the population (Wilkinson 2015). Migrants play a positive role in the South African economy. They contribute significantly by providing jobs, paying rent, and providing affordable goods to the consumer. In South Africa 11% of the migrants are employers, 21% are classed as self-employed, 32.65% are employed in South Africa's informal sector (Wilkinson 2015). A study conducted by the Observatory revealed that of the 618 international migrant traders interviewed, 31% rented properties from South Africans and employed 1,223 people of which 503 are South Africans (Wilkinson 2015). The presence of these immigrants has given rise to anti-foreign attitudes. Hostile attacks are also directed against Pakistanis. They are perceived as 'dirty' and called 'Paki' (Park and Rugunanan 2009: 18). Many immigrant women of domestic violence found these hostile conditions worsened their situation. Beauty found the locals very "unfriendly". Her husband became a drug addict few months after his arrival to Durban. His failure to find unemployment, and constant clashes with the law had an impact on their domestic life. She would often be beaten when her husband was under the influence of drugs. She would try to seek assistance from the locals living nearby her home and fellow immigrants. However, some of the locals would often make her feel that she was an "outsider". She subsequently limited her social circle to fellow Mozambicans and they became an important source of refuge in times of difficulty. She copes with these challenges by adjusting her life; she stays indoors, does not socialize a lot and never walks around at night. Rita affirms having experienced similar hardships as Beauty: "I faced a lot of challenges when I first arrived in South Africa. The locals here are not friendly like people in Nigeria. In South Africa when I first arrived, they would call me 'kwerekwere' which means foreigner." She adds: "Fear prevents you from living a full life in South Africa as people are suspicious of foreigners. I do not feel welcome in this country" (Interview, 7 February 2015). Given this hostile and unfriendly environment, spouses often use this factor to their advantage to reaffirm their masculine and physical control over women who at times, feel powerless to seek help from the local police and local people. Moreover, in many instances given that the women's immigration status is dependent on her spouse, this factor is often used by spouses or partners, to force women to remain in abusive relationships. According to Kiwanuka (2008), "lack of confidence among the police and secondary victimisation issues were also stated by women in the national survey of sexual violence as factors that prevented them from seeking assistance from the police" (Kiwanuka 2008:33).

8. CULTURAL FACTORS

Cultural factors can, in some instances, play a significant role in silencing women from reporting domestic abuse. Sarah, hailed from India and was a housewife. Sarah was challenged by traditional and cultural factors in seeking

aid against domestic abuse. She was raised in a community which supported patriarchal beliefs which perpetuated male dominance and female submissiveness. After marriage she was expected to be a subordinate wife, irrespective of abusive conditions, and not to challenge his male authority. She states: “It is not our culture to leave our husbands. It will bring shame to my family, and my parents will be really disappointed. How can I let them down, I have four children, where will I go, who will support me?” Attempts to speak to their spouses to seek aid for their violent behaviour did not help the situation. She adds: “He was very, angry. I pleaded with him to get help but he refused and he beat me again”. Sarah felt further constrained as her immigration status was that of a dependent. Sarah feared separation or divorce would limit access to her children. Whilst domestic violence amongst immigrant women is prevalent in all countries, in some instances cultural factors do play a contributory factor in restricting women from seeking help. The importance of family honour and reputation, “being a good wife” and abiding by cultural norms led some South Asian immigrant women internalising their spouse’s acts of violence (Siddiqui et al. 2008; Erez 2000).

9. LANGUAGE FACTORS

One of the major challenges for immigrant women is the language barrier, the inability to communicate in the local spoken language. Language acquisition, according to Ojong was a common experience among immigrant women in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In her study Ojong reveals that immigrant women were stigmatized for “not understanding the language” (Ojong 2002: 67). Women struggles to learn that local languages such as Afrikaans and Zulu and this had important ramifications of how they were perceived and treated by locals (Ojong 67–69). According to Tia, “if you cannot speak Zulu or the local language you are seen as a foreigner, they discriminate against you” (Interview, 3 March 2015). Rita adds that her failure to learn the local language exacerbated her ability to assimilate easily in the community, and it “can be so frustrating”. Sarah was fluent only in Hindi and spoke little English. She was surprised that local Indians did not speak Hindi fluently. Her inability to communicate in English relegated her efforts to communicate with the locals. Frustrated, she kept to herself, felt isolated and socialised only with her closest friends who were fellow immigrants from India. In this study, the women indicated that language barrier posed a serious challenge to them as they often cannot report their abuses to the police. Their statements and testimonies were often misunderstood and misinterpreted and often lead to distortions. As Sarah describes: “I tried to learn English but it was extremely difficult. My husband disapproved of me learning English and insisted that I speak Hindi only.” Studies on domestic violence and migration in South Africa have alluded to the nexus between public and private violence. For example, Kiwanuka study has

revealed how immigrant women at times fear public violence given their status as migrants and hence have become tolerant of their domestic violence (Kiwauka 2008: 77–78). Migration related factors such as language and unemployment heightened women’s fear of public violence. Kiwanuka states, “they would rather tolerate violence of any kind from their partners than expose themselves to unknown dangers associated with public violence that could be worse for them” (Kiwauka 2008:78). Literature on the linkages between language and domestic violence has highlighted how this factor contributed as a barrier in women immigrants reporting domestic violence and seeking social services (Abraham 1998, Erez 2000; Raj and Silverman 2002). According to Orloff and Garcia (2013), “language is a particularly significant barrier to obtaining police assistance during an abusive incident. In one survey of Latina battered immigrant women in the United States, the overwhelming majority of participants spoke little or no English. In the case of the women who did not speak English, two-thirds of the time, the police who responded to the domestic violence calls did not speak Spanish to the victim or use an interpreter.” They further add, “language barriers are exacerbated when the person who provides linguistic support is abusing an immigrant woman. Learning English becomes difficult when an immigrant lacks the money, time, and resources to attend English as a Second Language Classes. Immigrant women who are working and who are the primary caretakers of their children and who are the family cooks and homemakers, often have little time of their own to devote to English classes.” (Orloff and Garcia 2013).

10. UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment was another critical immigration impediment for women. Rita from Nigeria works in a salon. As an immigrant she faced many obstacles to acquire employment. She finally started a hair salon from her home. For Rita the difficulty of acquiring a job forced her to stay in an abusive relationship, “my husband was paying the rent, buying the food, he was paying for everything. I had no income, no friends or relatives to help me, so I became dependent on him financially and emotionally”. Rita’s dependence on her spouse’s income made her totally dependent on him. She felt “helpless” as a woman and immigrant. According to Orloff and Garcia (2015), “lack of money” amongst immigrant women is a primary reason for many to remain in an abusive relationship. Lack of education further compounded unemployment opportunities. Sarah had little schooling and no tertiary education, “My parents were strict, girls were not allowed to be educated, but were to be domesticated for marriage”. These cultural norms and traditional notions of gender roles exacerbated immigrant women’s position in the migration process. For women like Rita and Sarah it made them vulnerable and powerless. However, for women like Tia her formal schooling and skills acquired in Zimbabwe provided her with an opportunity to

establish her own beauty salon. Over a period of time she became economically stable and finally managed to leave her abusive spouse.

11. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted some salient aspects of domestic violence in the migration process. Whilst domestic violence is common globally, factors such as xenophobia, immigration policy, language and cultural barriers, unemployment, unequal gender relations in the migration context, to some extent, exacerbate domestic violence. Women immigrants have responded differently to domestic abuse given their socio-economic and cultural factors. Familial and social isolation of women immigrants in the host country have provided men with opportunities to control and dominate women's lives. In other cases, some women as this study has alluded, have utilized social and familial network to seek assistance. Unemployment and educational status impact on women's vulnerability to domestic abuse in the migration process. Lack of job opportunities and income force women to stay in abusive relationships. For some it is a lifestyle choice in the midst of being a foreigner in the host country. Cultural factors in the context of patriarchy and gender roles also increases women's vulnerability to domestic violence. In this study Sarah's narrative as an immigrant from Asia (India) reflects the strong cultural factors related to her domestic abuse. Women immigrants from Africa in this study did not highlight similar cultural trajectories in the context of domestic violence.

Further studies on the intersections and complexities of migration and domestic abuse are necessary, particularly in the South African context, to examine the nature of domestic violence, coping mechanisms adopted by women and how women can be assisted in this regard. This is crucial for the mental and physical health of women immigrants who are an important element in South African society.

REFERENCES

Abraham, M. 1998.

Speaking of the unspeakable: martial violence against South Asian immigrant women in the Unites States. Indian Journal of Gender Studies 5: 215–241.

Beall, J. 1982.

Class, Race and Gender – The Political Economy of Women in Colonial Natal. Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Natal, Durban.

- Bozzoli, B. and Nkotsoe, M. 1991.
Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa 1900–1983. Witwatersrand University Press: Witwatersrand.
- Clifford, J. 1994.
Diasporas. **Cultural Anthropology** 9(3): 302–338.
- Chant S. and Radcliffe S. 1992.
Migration and Development: The Importance of Gender. In: S. Chant (ed.), *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries*, pp. 1–29. London: Belhaven Press.
- Cohen, R. 1997.
International Migration: South Africa in Global Perspective. In: J. Crush and F. Veriava (eds.), *Transforming South African Migration and Immigration Policy*. Cape Town: Kingston, Southern African Migration Project (SAMP).
- Dahinden, J. 2005.
Contesting transnationalism? lessons from the study of Albanian migration networks from former Yugoslavia. **Global Networks** 5(2): 191–208.
- Dodson, B. 1998.
Women on the Move: Gender and Cross-Border Migration to South Africa. Migration Policy Series No. 9. Cape Town and Queen's University: The Southern African Migration Project (SAMP).
- Dutton, M., Leslye O., and G. A. Hass. 2000.
Characteristics of help-seeking behaviors, resources, and Services Needs of Battered Immigrant Latinas: Legal and policy implications. **Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy** 7(2): 245–305.
- Erez, E. 2000.
Immigration, culture conflict and domestic violence/woman battering. **Crime Prevention Community Safety** 2(1): 27–36.
- Erlank N. 1995.
Thinking it wrong to remain unemployed in the pressing times: the experiences of two English settler wives. **South African Historical Journal** 33(1): 62–82.
- 1996 *Writing women in(to) early nineteenth century Cape Town*. **Kronos, Journal of Cape History** 23: 75–90.
- Hiralal, K. 2013.
Daughters of Gujarat in the diaspora: immigrant women, identity and agency in Natal. **Journal for Contemporary History** 38(1): 1–21.
- 2014 *Women and migration in South Africa*. **South Asian Diaspora** 6(1): 63–75.
- 2015 *Migration and education narratives of student mobility in South Africa*. **The Oriental Anthropologist** 15(2): 331–344.

Human Rights Watch 2000.

Violence Against Women Refugees, Report Documents UNHCR Failures, 25 September 2000. Available at:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2000/09/25/tanzania-violence-against-women-refugees> (Accessed 19 October 2017).

Kallivayalil, D. 2010.

Narratives of suffering of South Asian immigrant survivors of domestic violence. Violence Against Women 16: 789–811.

Kihatso C.W. 2010.

Now You See Me, Now You Don't: Methodologies and Methods of the Interstices. In: E. Palmary, E. Burman, K. Chantler and P. Kiguwa (eds.), *Gender and Migration – Feminist Interventions*, pp.141–162. London: Zed Books.

2007 Invisible Lives, Inaudible Voices? The Social Conditions of Migrant Women in Johannesburg. In: N. Gasa (ed.), *Basus'iimbokodo, bawael'imilambo / They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers – Women in South African History*, pp. 397–419. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Kiwanuka, M. 2008

The Effect of Migration on Urban Migrant Women's Perceptions of Domestic Violence. Unpublished MA dissertation. Johannesburg, South Africa: University of the Witwatersrand.

2010 For Love or Survival: Migrant Women's Narratives of Survival and Intimate Partner Violence in Johannesburg. In: I. Palmary, E. Burman, K. Chantler and P. Kiguwa (eds), *Gender and Migration – Feminist Interventions*, pp. 163–179. London: Zed Books.

Kistner, U. 2003.

Gender-Based Violence and HIV/AIDS in South Africa: A Literature Review. Centre for AIDS Development, Research and Evaluation (CADRE) for the Department of Health, South Africa.

Kudat, Ayse. 1982.

Personal, Familial and Societal Impacts of Turkish Women's Migration to Europe. In: R.G. Parris (ed.), *Living in Two Cultures: The Socio-Cultural Situation of Migrant Workers and their Families*, pp. 291–305. New York: Gower/UNESCO Press.

Lefko-Everett, K. 2007.

Voices from the Margins: Migrant Women's Experiences in Southern Africa. The Southern African Migration Project, Migration Policy Series No. 46. Available at: <http://samponline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Acrobat46.pdf> (Accessed 11 September 2016).

Mahler, S.J. and Pessar, R.P. 2001.

Gendered geographies of power: analyzing gender across transnational spaces. Identities 7(4): 441–459.

- Meny-Gibert, S and Chiumia, S. 2016.
Fact sheet: where do South Africa's international migrants come from. **Africa Check**, 16 August 2016. Available at: <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/geography-migration/> (Accessed 14 October 2017).
- Nolin, C. 2006.
Transnational Ruptures: Gender and Forced Migration. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Orloff, L. and Garcia, O. 2013.
Dynamics of Domestic Violence Experienced by Immigrant Victims, Breaking Barriers: A Complete Guide to Legal Rights and Resources for Battered Immigrants. In: Leslye Orloff (ed.), *Empowering Survivors: Legal Rights of Immigrant Victims of Sexual Assault*, pp. 1–23. Washington, D.C.: The National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project. Available at: <http://www.evawintl.org/library/documentlibraryhandler.ashx?id=456> (Accessed 16 October 2017).
- Orloff, L.E., and Jang, D. and Kelin, C.F. 1995.
With No Place to Turn: Improving Advocacy for Battered Immigrant Women. **Family Law Quarterly** 29(2): 313–329.
- Ojong, V.B.A. 2002.
A Study of Independent African Migrant Women in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa): Their Lives and Work Experiences. Unpublished MA thesis in Anthropology, University of Zululand.
- Palmary, E. Burman, K. Chantler and P. Kiguwa, (eds). 2010.
Gender and Migration – Feminist Interventions. Zed Books: London.
- Park, Y.J. and Rugunanan, P. 2009.
Visible and Vulnerable: Asian Migrant Communities in South Africa. Atlantic Philanthropies Report. Available at: http://atlanticphilanthropies.org/app/uploads/2010/07/13_Visible_and_Vulnerable_c.pdf (Accessed 21 May 2015).
- Parle, J. 1995.
History, she wrote: a reappraisal of dear Louisa in the 1990s. **South African Historical Journal** 33(1): 33–61.
- Patai, D. 1988.
Constructing a self: a Brazilian life story. **Feminist Studies** 14(2): 143–166.
- Raj, A. and Silverman J. 2002.
Violence against women: the roles of culture, context, and legal immigrant status on intimate partner violence. **Violence Against Women** 8(3): 367–398.

- Sosulski, M.R, Buchanan, N.T and Donnell, C.M. 2010.
Life history and narrative analysis: feminist methodologies contextualizing black women's experiences with severe mental illness. Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare XXXVII(3): 29–57.
- Siddiqui, N, Ismail S and Allen M. 2008.
Safe to Return? Pakistani Women, Domestic Violence and Access to Refugee Protection. A report of a transnational research Project conducted in the UK and Pakistan. South Manchester law Centre, United Kingdom.
- South African Institute of International Affairs [SAIIA] 2008.
In Southern Africa, women are changing the face of Migration.
Available at: <http://www.saiia.org.za/news/in-southern-africa-women-are-changing-the-face-of-migration> (Accessed 21 May 2015).
- Tjaden, P. and N. Thoennes. 2000.
Extent, Nature and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. The National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at:
<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf> (Accessed 19 October 2017).
- Van-Helten, J.J. and Williams, K. 1983.
The crying need of South Africa': the emigration of single British women to the Transvaal, 1901–10. Journal of Southern African Studies 10(1): 17–38.
- Vale, P.C.J. (2003).
Security and Politics in South Africa – The Regional Dimension.
London: Boulder.
- Wilkinson, K. 2015.
Analysis: Are Foreigners stealing jobs in South Africa. Africa Check, 8 February 2015. Available at:
<https://africacheck.org/2015/02/08/analysis-are-foreigners-stealing-jobs-in-south-africa-2/> (Accessed 21 May 2015).

INTERVIEWS

- Tia, Durban; recorded by Hiralal, K., 22 November 2015.
Rita, Durban; recorded by Oyebamiji, S., 5 February 2015 and 23 April 2015.
Sarah, Durban; recorded by Hiralal, K., 15 February 2015.
Beauty, Durban; recorded by Hiralal, K., 2 April 2015.

About the author: *Kalpana Hiralal* is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Sciences at the Howard College Campus at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate level modules on global history, women, gender and politics, culture and tourism. Her PhD dissertation focused on the South Asian Diaspora to Africa in the context of settlement, trade and identity formation. Her most recent book publications are: *Satyagraha, Passive Resistance and its Legacy* (Manohar 2015), *Global Hindu Diaspora Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Manohar 2016) and *Pioneers of Satyagraha Indian South African Defy Racist Laws 1907–1914* (Navajivan 2017).