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A framework for the labour market integration of female accompanying spouses in South Africa

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Orientation: The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda highlights that migration is key to inclusive growth and economic development. For economic development to be realised, the full integration of skilled migrants into the labour market is essential.

Research purpose: This research aimed at exploring the labour market experiences and self-initiated strategies of accompanying spouses, also referred to as tied migrants, in their attempt to achieve labour market integration (LMI) in South Africa.

Motivation for the study: Skilled migration of tied migrants remains understudied in the Global South context. Thus, this study sought to fill this gap.

Research approach/design and method: The study used a qualitative research approach to interrogate the experiences of accompanying spouses in South Africa. Thirteen one-on-one interviews were conducted, each lasting for 1.5 h on average. Thematic analysis was applied to the data.

Main findings: Self-initiated strategies that reflect agency and a pushback on governing technologies by accompanying spouses can facilitate integration into the South African labour market. However, these strategies do not guarantee full LMI. The broad exclusionary context, premised on ethnicised rationalities that characterise the South African labour market, makes full LMI difficult to achieve, particularly in the absence of support for integration.

Practical/managerial implications: This study makes practical contributions by making policy recommendations which consider the global agenda for women, especially concerning gender equality and empowerment.

Contribution/value-add: Skilled migration in the global south remains significantly under-researched and there is evidence of significant gaps in literature particularly pertaining to migration by skilled women migrants. This research contributes to bridging this gap.

Keywords: self-initiated strategies; labour market integration; accompanying spouse; governmentality; economic development.

Introduction

Orientation

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda highlights that migration is a key aspect of inclusive growth and economic development (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2019). In many countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the management of migration is increasingly focused on promoting migration for development (Koczan, Peri, Pinat, & Rozhkov, 2021; Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development [OECD], 2014). For economic development to be realised, however, the full integration of migrants into the labour market through the adoption of appropriate policies is essential (OECD/International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2016). The resultant economic benefits of this integration include enhanced contribution by migrants to the host country's gross domestic product, improved remittances to the country of origin and the economic empowerment of migrants themselves.

The economic and social progress of migrant women can be realised through their inclusion in migration policies and practices. The labour market integration (LMI) of migrant women, for instance, can be facilitated through the adoption of administrative policies and regulations to promote gender equality and protect their rights and interests (Sandoz, 2020). This is essential for migrant women's advancement and empowerment. The global development agenda takes cognisance of the importance of this through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular through Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 8.8, which speak about the imperative

of gender equality and the empowerment of all women as well as the protection of their labour rights and the promotion of safe working environments (Holliday, Hennebry & Gammage, 2018; O'Neil et al., 2016; Saurombe, 2018).

In the Global North, that is, developed countries, the need to fully integrate migrant women has come to the forefront of policy debates (Filippi & Guarna, 2018), which emphasises the need to develop gender-sensitive migration policies and programmes for integration. In the context of family migration, exclusion of spouses of skilled lead migrants – many of whom are also skilled themselves – denotes particularly negative consequences for them as they endeavour to settle in new countries where support mechanisms for integration may be limited or nonexistent.

Extant literature shows that female migrants in the family context tend to be invisible (Filippi & Guarna, 2018). This means their need for integration and their potential skills contribution in the host country are often overlooked (Riaño, 2021). The skills that are not utilised or underutilised represent a waste that may weaken the economic benefits of migration (OECD/ILO, 2016). There is therefore a need to explore the complexities that accompanying spouses face by interrogating the inequality and exclusion that impede their access to the labour market (Izaguirre & Walsham, 2021; Morokvasic, 2014).

Despite the growing prominence of migratory flows therein (International Organisation for Migration, 2022), migration in the south-to-south context, that is, referring to developing nations typically located south of the globe (developing countries), remains significantly under-researched (Bastia & Piper, 2019; Gisselquist & Tarp, 2019). While the estimated global stock of international migrants grew to 281 million, intraregional migration in sub-Saharan Africa grew by as much as 63% in 2020 (UNDESA, 2019). Research in the Global South has typically focused on unskilled or semi-skilled workers, and therefore little is known about skilled migration. Furthermore, while the growing phenomenon of the feminisation of migration is acknowledged, little is known about female migrants who emigrate in the context of family, as spouses, particularly those who are skilled professionals (Izaguirre & Walshman, 2021).

Migration is highly influenced by gender, where the freedoms and experiences of women are strongly influenced by power relations, gender norms and unequal rights (O'Neil et al., 2016). Few studies have traced the labour market experiences of skilled tied migrants and the active strategies they employ to overcome barriers to LMI (Föbker, 2019; Wojczewski, Pentz, Blacklock & Hoffmann, 2015). This study sought to add to this literature from an underexplored south-to-south migration, that is, migration between developing countries, applying the theory of governmentality as developed by Michel Foucault (1978).

Literature review
Labour market integration

In this study, LMI is a multidimensional term related to how likely an immigrant is to be part of the labour force. The term goes further than (un)employment and considers earnings, working hours, nature of a contract and skills utilisation.

Theoretical framework

Extant literature regarding the LMI of migrant women highlights the complexities of the integration process. Labour market integration is highly context-specific and is influenced by various factors that produce variable outcomes for the individual migrant. This study utilised the theory of governmentality to explore the link between the macrophysics and microphysics of power that shapes labour market outcomes of accompanying spouses in South Africa. Importantly, this study acknowledges migrant women as protagonists who aggregate their experiences and perceptions to challenge dominant understandings and appropriate them in a just and beneficial manner to their own lives. The theory of governmentality has been applied to diverse contexts, including breastfeeding (Malatzky, 2017), informal settlements (Massey, 2014,2019), headscarf affairs and language training policies (Teo, 2019).

In the context of LMI, labour market experiences are the outcomes of both governing technologies, that is, factors which either positively or negatively mediate various overarching power relations where accompanying spouses are concerned, and the attempts to resist or counter any labour market restrictions. Counter-conducts denote forms of resistance to the way one's field of action is shaped. Counter-conducts speak about how accompanying spouses seek to shape or define their own identity, pursue their own goals and improve their lives. The present project utilised an intersectional approach to enhance analytical sophistication by deconstructing the interconnectedness and interdependencies of factors influencing LMI. Intersectionality accounts for how heterogeneous members of a group may have markedly different experiences because of race, country of origin, class or other social locations (Atewolougun, 2019).

The theory of governmentality

Michel Foucault is regarded as one of the second-stream power scholars alongside Deleuze, whose focus was on the techniques, practices and strategies of power, that is, how power is practised. The theory of governmentality is one such theory expounded by Foucault in one of his later writings, entitled *Security, Territory, Population* (1978). By governmentality, Foucault has in mind structured mentalities, practices, rationalities and techniques through which people, or a system, are governed. The term 'government' does not refer to an institution but denotes a form of power (Teo, 2019).

Governmentality as conduct of conduct

Governmentality is referred to as the 'conduct of conduct' (Foucault 1982, pp. 220–221), which ranges from 'governing self to governing others'. It refers to any attempt to shape behaviour according to a specific set of norms and for various ends because of some degree of deliberation (Dean, 2009).

With regard to LMI, conduct of conduct refers to the self-initiated strategies that accompanying spouses are necessitated to employ to elude the limitations inherently imposed on them by the South African labour and other relevant legislations.

Governmentality is further understood to be the various techniques and practices used by state and non-state agencies to conduct the conduct of others (Death, 2016). In the context of skilled migration, the state and other meso-level actors influence skilled labour migration outcomes (Raghuram, 2004). Accompanying spouses' behaviours, aspirations, motivations and conduct are shaped by the state's practices, policies, programmes, gendered social systems and labour market conditions. As Dean (2009) states, in the manner that there is a plurality of authorities and agencies, numerous behaviours or actions are also to be governed.

Governmentality can shape the subjectivities or experiences, that is, the decisions or understanding based on an individual's experiences of the ones governed (in this case, accompanying spouses). For instance, Holliday et al. (2018) argued that the factors by which migrant women are categorised as dependants, whether by design or default, define their rights and their ability to claim those rights. Raghuram (2004, p. 304) argued that women are typically 'cast as followers and as losers within patriarchal systems in the context of family migration'. Governmentality, however, also acknowledges that the one who is governed is an actor and a locus of freedom (Dean, 2009). This suggests that the form of power wielded through governmentality is not unilateral or totalising (Teo, 2019). In the context of LMI, this means that although the self-initiated strategies for LMI by accompanying spouses may yield some sort of success or advantage, such advantage is not guaranteed as the strategies used are not supported by official legislation. Death (2016) noted that immigration practices, policies and programmes create different immigrant classes and inherently shape the identity and rights of migrants and their ability to claim those rights. This implies the importance for the South African government to consider enshrining the various appropriate LMI avenues and trajectories of suitably skilled accompanying spouses, in formal legislation, particularly to the benefit of the South African economy.

Intersectionality theory

This study also utilised intersectionality as an analytical tool. Intersectionality offers a way of deducing how heterogeneous members of specific groups may differ based on several analytical levels (Atewologun, 2019; Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). Through the intersectional approach, equal attention is paid to various levels of oppression and advantage as they are faced by women (Chinyakata, Raselekoane & Mudau, 2019) and, in this case, accompanying spouses.

Intersectionality addresses how racism, economic disadvantage, patriarchy and other discriminatory mechanisms work in tandem to produce inequality that structures the relative positions of women (UN, 2017). The propensity to be fixated on one or only a few factors impacting migrant women is therefore eliminated through this approach. Kaushik and Walsh (2018) argued that complete understanding of the settlement needs of migrants requires the intersectional approach, as it provides full engagement in the sources of difference. Further, the approach means that those who are most in need can be adequately targeted for integration programmes.

The South African context

Migration to South Africa, which began well before the 21st century, accelerated after the dawn of democracy and completely transformed the country's demographic profile. Recent statistics show that South Africa is ranked among the top 20 nations hosting the largest population of international migrants. The proportion of international migrants as a percentage of the population rose from 2.2% in 2000 to 7.1% in 2017 (UN, 2017). These data reflect South Africa's prominence as a regional migration hub in sub-Saharan Africa (IOM, 2022; Mbiyozo, 2018) and its influential pull factors of a higher standard of living, relatively stable economy and lower cost of living (Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015; Kanayo, Anjofui & Steigler, 2019). Given these increased migrant flows, the management of migration in South Africa has become a critical social, political and economic issue but also an emotive one. As reported in the media, concerns surrounding the employment of foreign nationals have spurred the development of a new National Labour Migration Policy, as well as the tabling of amendments to various key policies including the *Employment Services Act*, the *Immigration Act* and the *Citizenship Act* as well as the *Refugees Act* (Business Tech, 2022).

South Africa abounds with controversies about the purported impacts of migration on the labour market and the country's scarce resources. Rising unemployment accompanied by the belief that migrants 'steal jobs' and the alleged readiness of unskilled migrants to work for lower wages have all contributed to the rise of xenophobic attacks against immigrants (Chinyakata et al., 2019; Parshotam & Ncube, 2017; Vermaak & Muller, 2019). These attacks are particularly severe against migrants of African and Asian origin (OECD/ILO, 2018a). Evidence shows that immigrants do not displace native-born workers and, in fact, make a significant contribution to the economy of South Africa (IOM, 2022). For instance, immigrants contributed 9% to the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011 (OECD/ILO, 2018b). However, South Africa faces a chronic unemployment challenge because of an increasing population but limited industrial expansion. The unemployment rate stood at around 27.7% in 2017 (StatsSA, 2018). At the same time, the country faces a critical skills shortage.

From practices of racial exclusion in the colonial and apartheid era, South Africa has become a de facto multicultural society over the years. According to the IOM's World Migration Report 2022, there are approximately 2.9 million international migrants living in South Africa (IOM, 2022). Mixed migratory flows to South Africa have grown

and become more diversified and, significantly, more feminised (Mbiyozo, 2018). Many migrants in South Africa have their origins in neighbouring countries. Zimbabwe, for instance, is one of the major source countries owing to its proximity, ethnic connections and culture (Mbiyozo, 2018; Ncube, 2017; Ncube, Bahta & Jordaan, 2019), and as Souza and Flippen (2020) noted, Zimbabwe is also a key source of highly skilled migrants. Other key sending countries, mainly from within but also from without the Southern African Development Community (SADC), include, among others, Namibia, Nigeria, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique (Souza & Flippen, 2020). Circular and short-term migration typically characterises most of the migration, as not all migrants choose to settle permanently. Irregular migration also characterises the migratory flows, owing largely to the emphasis on skilled migration and the strict requirements for work permits which make it virtually impossible for those who are unskilled or semiskilled to acquire legal authority to work (Chinyakata et al., 2019). Through the White Paper for International Migration (Department of Home Affairs [DHA], 2017), the government adopted a neoliberal approach to migration through which it seeks to 'harness immigration for economic development and national security' (DHA Annual Report, 2017/2018).

Governmentality and labour market integration

Multiple benefits accrue to migrants who successfully integrate into labour markets in host countries. These benefits include socio-economic empowerment, social integration and greater self-reliance (Hiralal, 2017; Korteweg, 2017; Røysum, 2018). Labour market integration is a key social process and is also a critical gateway to other forms of integration, such as health, housing and education. The benefits of social integration also accrue to children of migrants. However, a successful integration for tied migrants is not guaranteed despite possession of human capital and work experience. Integration is significantly shaped by power relations insofar as they shape the identity, person and self (Dean, 2009; Liversage, 2009; Ncube & Mkwananzi, 2020). This shaping of subjectivities ultimately shapes the lived experiences of tied migrants in the labour market space. In the context of LMI of accompanying spouses, gendered, ethnicised and racialised ideologies play a critical role in shaping LMI outcomes.

Gendered rationalities which are entrenched within patriarchal ideologies and systems (Crush et al. 2018; Krieger, 2020; Phan et al., 2015) have a negative impact on female accompanying spouses' LMI. In the context of family migration, accompanying spouses are typically subjectified as 'followers and losers' (Raghuram, 2004, p. 32), 'second migrants' (Filippi & Guarna, 2018, p. 690), 'add-ons' (Kotze, Blazheva & Dyimitrov, 2021, p. 182) or stereotyped as dependants (Morokvasic, 2014). Gendered rationalities have a strong impact on the mobility of female migrants, both on a social scale and a spatial scale (Hiralal, 2017;

Khattab, Babar, Ewers & Shaath, 2020). These rationalities find expression within diverse discourses and governing mechanisms which manifest premigration, postmigration and in the act of migration, which is itself a highly gendered process. While female migrants are likely to emigrate as accompanying spouses, their male counterparts are more likely to emigrate as lead spouses (Filippi & Guarna, 2018; Föbker, 2019; Föbker & Imani, 2017). Through hegemonic norms, women are socialised to conform to traditional gender roles. Stronger beliefs in traditional gender roles are associated with poorer labour market outcomes (Ala-Mantila & Fleishman, 2018; Chinyakata et al., 2019). Female tied migrants socialised to prioritise the needs of their families become primarily nurturers and caregivers who invariably set aside their career aspirations (Föbker, 2019; Phan et al., 2015).

Gendered rationalities also find expression in migration policies, such as those that ascribe the identity of breadwinner to men while according dependant status to spouses (Ala-Mantila & Fleishmann, 2018; Chinyakata et al., 2019; O'Neil et al. 2016). The rationalities also manifest in discourses that characterise migrant men as active and productive and relegate female migrants to passivity, invisibility and reproduction (Chinyakata et al., 2019). The mechanisms through which migrant women are categorised as dependants, whether by design or default, define their rights and their ability to claim those rights (Holliday et al., 2018). In South Africa, spousal visas are contemplated under the visitor's visa section (South African Government Gazette, Volume 587, Number 376709). This effectively denies accompanying spouses the ability to work, study or run a business (DHA, 2017). Skills deemed critical in the South African labour market tend to be male-dominated (Mbiyozo, 2018). Those without these skills, more likely female accompanying spouses, are deemed unskilled and therefore at a greater disadvantage with respect to LMI. Gender can therefore produce boundaries that can result in underemployment and deskilling (Grigrioleit-Richter, 2017). Deskilling for many female migrants means the nonrecognition of human capital skills and experience acquired in the home country (Mbiyozo, 2018; O'Neil et al., 2016; Røysum, 2018).

Labour policies and migration policies in South Africa have had an inextricable and enduring relationship. In this regard, one could argue that the rationalities that affect cross-mobility of migrants across borders therefore also impact LMI. Since the colonial era, rationalities of segregation and exclusion have played a critical role in labour migration in South Africa, resulting in discriminatory practices, particularly against those of African and Asian origin (StatsaSA, 2018). Xenophobic attitudes have continued to persist over the years, despite the adoption on paper of a more rights-based orientation to migration and the greater acceptance of the critical role of migration for economic development (Mckaiser, 2019;

Van Lennep, 2019). As Phan et al. (2015) and Krieger (2020) noted, ethnicised and racialised ideologies give rise to socially constructed boundaries. These ideologies, as they play out in the labour market, significantly influence what jobs are available and for whom (Ballarino & Panichella, 2017). Research suggests that migrants are generally unlikely to fare well in the South African labour market with the prospects of acquiring decent work being lower for the majority of migrants (StatsSA, 2018). Male migrants' prospects tend to be higher than that of female migrants, who tend to be clustered in the informal domestic work sector (Vanyoro, 2021). Vermaak and Muller (2019) noted that naturalised citizens are most likely to be able to acquire jobs. Skills that migrants bring to the host country can be disregarded solely based on minority status (Ballarino & Panichella, 2017).

Conceptual framework of the study

Figure 1 below provides a conceptual framework by the authors of this study, of the governing factors that affect LMI, the subjectivities (that is, lived experiences) faced by skilled women migrants in attempts to achieve LMI, and the counter conducts leveraged by skilled women migrants in efforts elude the unfavourable subjectivities they face.

Research purpose and objectives

By utilising governmentality as a theoretical framework, this study sought to explore the labour market experiences and self-initiated strategies of accompanying spouses in their attempt to achieve LMI in South Africa.

The related research objectives were as follows:

- to explore the governing technologies by which accompanying spouse conduct is shaped regarding the labour market
- to deconstruct the practices and knowledge that shape the identities and subjectivities of accompanying spouses seeking LMI in South Africa
- to determine the strategies that accompanying spouses utilise to overcome barriers to LMI.

Research design
Research approach

This study employed a narrative approach as a qualitative research method. The narrative approach allows for attainment of rich insights and personal meaning assigned to life experiences (Carless & Douglas, 2017). In addition, the narrative approach allows for the exploration of life experiences as they are perceived by the storyteller (Carless & Douglas, 2017). The narrative approach allows for the exploration of trajectories across time. These facets were all pertinent to the research, as it aimed to explore the lived experiences of accompanying spouses as they transitioned from leaving their country of origin, right through to their LMI in the host country. Through the retrospective lens that narrative inquiry allows us, we can derive meaning from human reality (Freeman, 2015). Life stories or short-range stories of landmark events were deemed the most suitable form of narrative approach for this study (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012).

Storytelling helps validate the voices of the hidden and marginalised. Notably, the study sought to give voice to female accompanying spouses in South Africa, who have thus far been invisible in LMI research. The narrative approach was helpful to understand how individuals coped with the challenges and difficulties of their lived experience and how their identities were shaped through interactions with others (Freeman, 2015).

Research strategy

Ontology is the fundamental viewpoint that people hold related to the nature of reality (Ngulube, 2020). The researchers studied the words and subjective meanings of participants that express perspectives about reality. The researchers observed these subjective meanings from the interviews which were conducted with participants (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

Epistemology is the philosophical theory of knowledge and looks at what constitutes knowledge (Ngulube, 2020). In this research, knowledge was generated by uncovering meaning associated with a social phenomenon. Knowledge about the
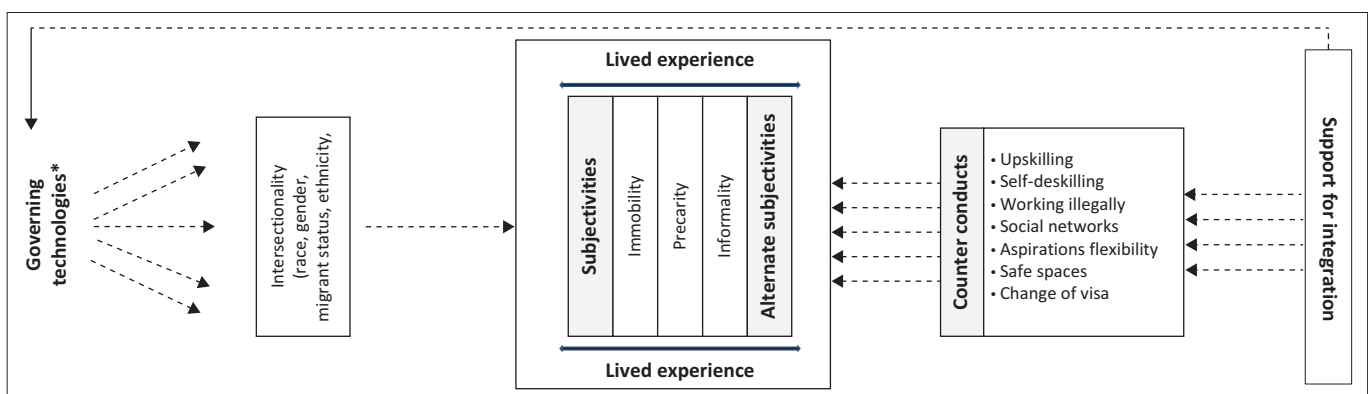

FIGURE 1: Framework for labour market integration of accompanying spouses.

phenomenon was based on the interaction between the researchers and participants, which led to assumptions and emergence of themes.

Research method

Research setting

This study took place in the South African labour market context, focusing on the perspectives of accompanying spouses. The research participants were female accompanying spouses who were pursuing LMI in South Africa. These participants originated from other African countries and migrated to South Africa in the context of family (with their male spouses, who were the lead migrants).

Research participants and sampling methods

In qualitative research, only a small sample may be used (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2021); however, the aim was to identify participants from whom the most can be learnt (Merriam, 2014). This assists the researcher to discover, understand and gain insight and ultimately provide an extensive and substantial description of the topic at hand (Creswell, 2009). This research set out to explore the labour market experiences and self-initiated strategies employed by accompanying spouses in their attempt to achieve LMI in South Africa.

According to the Statistics South Africa – Quarterly Labour Survey 2012–2017, Gauteng is home to the largest immigrant population in South Africa, followed by Mpumalanga and Limpopo, and the Free State province has seen a marginal increase in the immigrant population (StatsSA, 2019). Immigration data tend to be incomplete; however, it is estimated that there were 28 608 visas allocated to spouses under the temporary residence visa category between 01 June 2014 and 14 January 2016. In addition, during the same period, some 7195 critical skills visas were issued (DHA, 2017).

The target population for this study was as follows:

- migrant women who were either employed or previously employed in South Africa
- migrant women born outside and, at the time, not citizens of the country
- migrant women who either accompanied or followed their spouses to South Africa to effect family reunification
- migrant women who were legally resident in South Africa
- migrant women who came to South Africa with some form of tertiary education or work experience
- migrant women between the ages of 18 and 65 years.

The qualitative approach does not tend to be statistically generalisable (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2021; Polit & Beck, 2010), as may be the outcome of quantitative studies. However, internal generalisability and case-to-case generalisability were inferred. This study relied on a relatively small number (13) of participants. As Smith (2018) noted, purposefully chosen samples that are rich in knowledge are a strength of qualitative research. In this study, the researchers began to discover monotonous themes by the fifth interview, which suggested data saturation. This is supported by the views of Guest et al. (2006), Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2017) and Sebele-Mpofu (2020) that most codes emerge in the first six interviews, thus implying the sufficiency of the sample size used in this study. However, to garner deeper insights, interviews were continued up to the 13th participant.

The research had practical considerations, such as the potential number of participants who met the sampling criteria. As this study formed part of a doctoral study, limited funds and time were also a strong consideration in the choice of sampling technique.

The researchers opted to utilise purposive sampling to carefully and mindfully select the appropriate respondents for interview. Purposive sampling was employed based on the criteria outlined above. This was complimented by a snowball approach, where participants who were initially selected purposefully were given a chance to identify other suitable participants (Chinyakata et al., 2019).

At the time of the interviews, participants were aged between 35 and 52 years, and all were legally resident in South Africa. Many of the accompanying spouses entered on visitor's visas, although not all secured accompanying spouse visas after their arrival in South Africa. As shown in Table 1, most accompanying spouses emigrated to South Africa between 2007 and 2010. All migrants in the study had some form of tertiary qualification upon entry into South Africa, ranging from diplomas to master's degrees, and the majority went on to further their studies at South African tertiary institutions, where they acquired honours, master's and doctoral degrees. A total of four of the 13 tied migrants had qualifications or skills that fit into the critical or special skills categories, namely, accounting, urban planning, chemistry and animal science, which are also typically male-dominated sectors.

All participants migrated together with or followed their spouses in the process of family reunification. Almost all tied migrants had substantial work experience in the country of origin. The number of years to self-reported LMI in South Africa varied from a few months to a maximum of 9 years. Arguably, however, this may be regarded as years to formal employment, as most accompanying spouses reported that they felt overqualified or underpaid in their employment roles at the time of the interviews; that is, they had not been fully integrated into the labour market. At the time of the research, apart from one participant (who was previously employed), all the women were employed in educational institutions, religious organisations, nonprofit sector, multinational companies and the private sector.

TABLE 1: Characteristics of the research sample.

Pseudonym	Age at entry (years)	Highest qualification on entry to South Africa	Highest level of education currently	Field or occupation	Year of entry into South Africa	Years to labour market integration
Andrea	24	BSc Library Science	Masters in Development Studies	Programme Manager	2007	5
Monica	40	BA (Hons) Education Management	PhD in Education Management	Education	2009	2
Iris	29	BSc Animal Science	PhD in Animal Science	Lecturer	2009	3
Priscilla	39	Higher National Diploma in Accounting	PhD in Leadership	Pastor and /Business Woman	2006	9
Palesa	36	BSc Urban and Regional Planning	Master's in Urban Planning	Town planner	2014	3
Tshepiso	22	BSc Chemistry	PhD in Environmental Management	Environmental Manager	2009	7
Grace	33	BSC (Hons) Economics	Master's in Financial Management	Real Estate	2014	6
Theresa-May	26	National Diploma in Accounting	BA Accounting	Quality Analyst	2010	8
Lucille	27	Higher National Diploma Accounting	BA (Hons) Accounting	Lecturer	2012	4
Charlotte	22	National Diploma in Journalism	Diploma in Journalism	Admin	2008	7
Unarine	25	Bachelors in Human Resource Management (HRM)	Bachelors in Human Resource Management	Real Estate	2010	4
Phumzile	21	National Certificate in Purchasing, Supplies and Stores Management	BA Biblical Studies	Pastor	2005	9
Nancy	33	BA Education	Master's in Translation	Teaching Assistant	2016	-

Data collection methods

The data collection method used in this study considered the need to explore the peculiarity and intricacies of the individual's lived experience (Carless & Douglas, 2017). The emphasis was therefore to allow the interviewees to tell the stories from their own perspectives but also allowing the researchers to interrogate any gaps in the short life story or pursue details about issues of interest to the research. The establishment of good rapport and trust with the participants was regarded as a strong priority for the interview process (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2021).

The outline for the interview was based on previous knowledge regarding the subject matter (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The interview guide was semistructured, and the questions were specifically designed to elicit responses from the participants to interrogate the interplay between the microphysics and macrophysics of power (Michel Foucault, 1978; Lemke, 2012) and the layers of social stratification that give rise to diverse experiences in the labour market. Initially, interviewees were asked an open-ended question to elicit their own narratives regarding their transition from the country of origin to the host country in the context of family migration, with emphasis on their labour market trajectory. After the initial narrative, the researcher followed up with the semistructured guide to explore in detail various issues arising from the search for greater understanding. The first interview was regarded as the pilot. No issues were identified at this stage; therefore, the researchers proceeded with further interviews and the findings of the pilot interview were included in the study.

Some of the questions that were asked include:

- Briefly describe your circumstances and motivation(s) for immigrating to South Africa.

- In what ways has classification as a dependant or having a spousal permit restricted your freedoms within the household or family and/or elsewhere?
- In what ways has migration or any other institutional legislation or licencing requirements shaped your freedoms in terms of what career or studies you wanted to pursue upon arrival in South Africa? Prompts: SAQA, professional registration, licensing requirements, etc.:
  - Since emigrating to South Africa, have you ever had to put your career on hold? Please expand on the reasons for this.
  - Is your current occupation an outcome of your initial plans upon migration, or have you had to review your plans considering limitations imposed on you in the process of migration? Could you describe how this has come about. Prompts: have you had to change career and/or pursue tertiary studies to enhance your chances of being employed? Please expand on this.
- In what ways have your desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs in general been shaped by your migration into South Africa? (Either positively or negatively).
- How, if at all, have traditional gender role expectations within the home or work environment been a challenge or a hindrance with respect to your career trajectory?
- In your opinion, are your current job role, salary and benefits commensurate with your work experience and qualifications?
- Have you ever faced discrimination or misogyny or xenophobia in your quest to get employment based on either your gender, your country of origin (ethnicity) or because of your migration status (critical skills permit, work permit, PR vis-à-vis citizenship)?:
  - Have you encountered discrimination at any point in the employment cycle (application, employment, promotion and retrenchment) or in attaining relevant permits that allow you work? Prompts: delays, etc.

- Are there any cultural nuances or unspoken rules of the labour market that you have encountered in your quest to gain employment?
- What strategies did you employ to become integrated into the labour market? Prompts. Did you have to go back to school or at any point have to put off having children?

Data recording

The interviews were conducted online via Zoom, in adherence to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) protocols and the national lockdown restrictions at the time of data collection. The interviews were recorded on a mobile phone using a voice recording application and (field) notes were made throughout each interview. The recordings were transcribed verbatim prior to data analysis.

Strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity

The researchers employed the following strategies to ensure the quality and rigor of the data in this research (Hadi & Closs, 2015):

- *Triangulation*: This is done to ascertain the validity of the inferences which are derived from more than one data source. The researchers discussed the generated codes and themes to ensure credibility and conformability. The findings of this research were further discussed within the context of the two theories underpinning the study, namely, the governmentality and intersectionality theories.
- *Self-reflection*: The researcher's beliefs and past experiences can influence the research finding, and self-reflection enables the researcher to understand their position within the study. The researchers clearly stipulated their role in terms of the study and were careful of any bias that could have emanated from personal or subjective viewpoints.
- *Peer-debriefing*: The researcher's beliefs and past experiences can influence the research findings, and self-reflection helps the researcher understand their position in terms of the study. To promote reliability and validity, the researchers consulted with two other researchers who were not directly involved in the study.
- *Extensive description*: Increasing external transferability can be achieved by providing profound description. The researchers provided extensive descriptions of the research setting and sample traits, including the data gathering and analysis techniques in this study, thus enhancing the credibility and generalisability of the findings to other similar research settings, to an acceptable extent.
- *Lengthened engagement*: This is recommended for the sake of establishing rapport with participants. Deeper insights can be obtained from the participants through prolonged engagement. The researchers gained the trust of the participants by being involved with them for a

substantially long period of time, which allowed follow-up insights to be garnered.

According to Forero et al. (2018), the main criteria for rigour in qualitative research include credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. These were applied to this study in the following manner:

- *Credibility:* The interview schedule was tested prior to undertaking data collection. There were no issues established with the pilot, and therefore the findings were incorporated into the study. The researchers had the necessary skills and required knowledge to carry out the study.
- *Dependability:* Dependability was ensured through the means of detailed description of the research method and the data collection process.
- *Confirmability:* This was attained through self-reflection. The researcher's beliefs and past experiences can influence the research findings, and self-reflection enables the researcher to understand their position within the study. The researchers clearly stipulated their role in terms of the study and were careful of any bias that could have emanated from personal or subjective viewpoints.
- *Transferability:* Increasing external transferability can be achieved by providing profound description. The researcher provided extensive descriptions of the research setting and sample traits, including the data gathering and analysis techniques in this study, thus enhancing the credibility and generalisability of the findings to other similar research settings, to an acceptable extent. The latter form of generalisability is also known as case-to-case transfer (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014; Polit & Beck, 2010).

Data analysis

The primary goal of data analysis is to generate meaning. This research employed thematic analysis to explore the narratives of accompanying spouses. The advantage of using thematic analysis is that it is not tied to any theoretical framework and therefore remains flexible, mainly for use in various contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Exploring themes that are of greater relevance within the underexplored context of LMI in the South African context was important.

As stated by Merriam (2014), in qualitative research the processes of data analysis and data collection occur simultaneously. Braun and Clark's (2013) six stages of thematic analysis were utilised to analyse the data. The researchers compared themes across cases to demonstrate variations and trends in the responses gathered.

Reporting style

The findings of this research are outlined in narrative form, using verbatim quotes extracted from the transcripts of the research participant interviews, to support the various themes that emerged from the study.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in this study included confidentiality, voluntary participation, mitigation of risk, informed consent and academic integrity. In accordance with the ethical considerations of minimising harm, psychological counselling support from a registered psychologist was availed to all participants in case of any emotional distress arising from the research. The University of the Free State's General Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC) gave ethical approval for the study (reference number: UFS-HSD2020/0123/0506).

Results

The following section delineates the key findings that emerged from the study. Pseudonyms were used to differentiate the participants.

Theme 1: Governing technologies

Governing technologies had both a direct and an indirect impact on tied migrants with respect to LMI, ascribing rights, shaping subjectivities or experiences and shaping tied migrant strategies with respect to LMI. Gendered and ethnicised rationalities appeared to have the most significant impacts on labour market experiences:

'They told me with that spousal visa I'm not allowed to study nor seek employment, and it sounded like the most stupid thing ever. Like why would I come here and not want a job or to go to school. I know that people have different missions in life, but my mission was to study and work. It didn't make sense to me.' (Palesa, Master's in Urban Planning, town planner, took 3 years to LMI)

'The visa and my SAQA and getting all my paperwork done took me a year, just so I could get my qualifications evaluated; even though my bachelor's was a four-year bachelor's, they made me do an honours, whereas I was accepted in England for a master's straight away, so that was another setback.' (Nancy, Master's in Translation, teaching assistant, hasn't achieved LMI yet)

'… There was a job that I was supposed to have gotten because I wrote my one proposal and went all out to try and create an opportunity. That's what I did. Fortunately, the proposal was successful and the funding came through, but now when the papers had to be signed and I had to be given the job, I was told, remember that was a long process of proposal writing and all of those things, but then in the end when the job came and I was supposed to get it, I was told this is only for citizens and the job was given to somebody else.' (Palesa, Master's in Urban Planning, town planner, took 3 years to LMI)

Theme 2: Subjectivities

Accompanying spouses in this study also alluded to being subjectified through gendered rationalities, as appendages and dependants to their spouses. This was also reinforced through the South African migration policy wherein the dependant status was legally assigned to tied migrants. For many, this translated to domestication and becoming financially dependent on one's spouse:

'He was assigned to SA. Your company moves you, your baggage (i.e. family) moves along.' (Priscilla, PhD in Leadership, pastor and businesswoman, took 9 years to LMI)

'But I said I can't go back to Nigeria alone. My husband has a job in South Africa. So what would my parents say if I come back just because I couldn't find a job? So I just stayed put.' (Iris, PhD in Animal Science, lecturer, took 3 years to LMI)

'… I have my spouse permit which is written in big letters, accompanied by [*name supplied*] with passport number. It's all over. Even if you try and open an account, you have to be with him, literally.' (Unarine, Bachelor's in HRM, real estate agent, took 4 years to LMI)

While accompanying spouses appeared to be gainfully employed in the labour market, their employment did not necessarily equate to full LMI. The findings suggested that a substantial amount of underemployment exists among accompanying spouses:

'Cause you have to start again; after 15 years of service, I am employed as a new teacher. Then when I moved to the TVET [*technical and vocational education and training*], where I am at the moment, they have what they call salary levels. I came in as an entry despite the 15 years of experience plus [*the*] 5 years I had acquired in South Africa. You start afresh, yes …. When I went there, I had to start on level one, according to the new system of the department which says she is a new entry, so the salary level is for an entry level person…' (Monica, PhD in Education Management, educationist, took 5 years to LMI)

'But the job that I do, I think it's for a Grade 10 or 12 – let's put it that way. It's not something that I would say I'm so passionate about. I'd be lying if I say I'm passionate about it. It's only that I can do it, there is no passion there.' (Theresa-May, BA Accounting, quality analyst, took 8 years to LMI)

Theme 3: Self-initiated strategies

In the absence of support for integration, tied migrants were forced to devise their own strategies to enable integration into the labour market. These strategies were not always successful, and some could be regarded as detrimental to long-term career trajectories:

'I said, "Woo, an opportunity, I can waitress." In the back of my mind, it was like, "Let me just get something." It was just R1000 or something like that…' (Iris, PhD in Animal Science, lecturer, took 3 years to LMI)

'The best way is to bend the rules, whereby you get people that can help you to get your license to go to those companies and tell them, "You know what, I can do the job. But I don't have papers." But they will be just taking the risk when they employ you. If you want to do straight things, you literally sit on your couch and watch Netflix 24–7, 365 days'. (Unarine, Bachelor's in HRM, real estate agent, took 4 years to LMI)

'What I really wanted to do when I came to South Africa is not the same thing that I'm doing. I changed. There was a change of plan. I had planned on finding work and then working and then maybe upgrade my studies later, but because I wasn't getting what I wanted in terms of employment, there is fewer chances. And it was very difficult for me to get a work permit; I decided to go back to school to maybe widen my opportunities.' (Grace, Master's in Financial Management, real estate agent, took 6 years to LMI)

'… I was not getting a job but it was – okay, I have a little baby with me who's just 9 months old. So instead, how can I just improve myself as a person, how can I upgrade myself? I was doing study, just something which can maybe take my time. What can I say, yes! At least I'm just studying; I cannot just be idle for 24 hours'. (Lucille, BA (honours) Accounting, lecturer, took 4 years to LMI)

Theme 4: Counter-conducts

Self-initiated strategies are useful for the purpose of subverting some governing technologies that prevent full integration of accompanying spouses but not all. Governing technologies related to ethnicised exclusion seemed to be pervasive despite resistance. Achieving meaningful career trajectories was important for all tied migrants but was not always possible. Counter-conducts entailed utilising various strategies to avert unfavourable governing technologies and to achieve integration into the labour market:

'When I was here throughout, I looked for any kind of job … I tried my luck in basically every kind of business available, even those I wasn't qualified for.' (Iris, PhD in Animal Science, lecturer, took 3 years to LMI)

'It's like starting afresh, but I'm grateful it opened a door, and maybe because the company that I'm working with, it's quite a good company and I'm just grateful. And sometimes, you know how it is, at least you've got something; you're working, and it's opened [*a door*]. I need to start from here. I'll work my way up; that's how I look at it.' (Charlotte, Diploma in Journalism, administrator, took 7 years to LMI)

'After I had my permanent residence, I was employed as a primary school teacher but as an SGB [*school governing body*] teacher. I couldn't be employed in the Education Department because the policy is they start by employing South Africans, and there was nothing amazing about me having a master's because they said the basic qualification for one to teach in their primary schools is a first degree. People came and were employed in the Department on top of me – they were passing me.' (Monica, PhD in Education Management, educationist, took 2 years to LMI)

Discussion
Outline of the results

This study found that the LMI of accompanying spouses was likely to be impacted mainly by gendered and exclusionary governing technologies operating at the meso- and macro levels in the form of practices and policies, which was in line with the first research objective. The use of 'dependant' status to control accompanying spouse conduct on the part of the state fulfils a protective role in the labour market but has inadvertent consequences, such as the reinforcement of traditional gender roles and re-domestication. This is in line with previous studies (Banerjee & Phan, 2015; Holliday et al., 2018; Kotze et al., 2021; Kōu & Bailey, 2017).

This study employed the intersectionality theory as a heuristic device and the theory of governmentality to explore the labour market experiences of accompanying spouses. In line with the second research objective, the findings implied that accompanying spouses were likely to be subjected to immobility, precarity and informality in the labour market, as linked variously to gendered, ethnicised and racialised governing technologies (Zinatsa & Saurombe, 2022a, 2022b). Regarding their integration into the labour market, the participants were likely to cite issues such as underutilisation of skills because of being over-skilled, underpaid and precariously employed by the nature of employment, that is, professional versus nonprofessional and the inability to secure permanent contracts. These factors entailed relatively poor integration into the labour market and were not restricted to the initial period following migration but were rather sustained for an extended period. Studies supporting these findings include Krieger (2020), Mbiyozo (2018), O'Neil et al. (2016) and Sandoz (2020). This study further found that the governing technologies that appeared to be the most difficult to subvert were those relating to immobility on account of family ties and those relating to exclusion, particularly ethnicised exclusion, as supported by Föbker and Imani (2017).

There are significant barriers for accompanying spouses with intentions to integrate in the labour market. In line with the third research objective, this study showed how various strategies were instrumental in the process of trying to subvert governing technologies. However, while the strategies utilised were influential when it came to the attempt to subvert governing technologies impeding LMI into the host country, they were not necessarily successful. Structural factors limited agency. For example, legality to work could only be acquired on account of the correct documentation issued promptly by the DHA. However, this was not always the case, despite eligibility as similarly found in Föbker (2019) and Mbiyozo (2018).

Practical implications

Policy frameworks have a direct impact on migrant outcomes and determine the opportunities that may be available for accompanying spouses to capitalise on. However, as noted in this study, policies developed in the host country do not constitute the entire solution to the problem. The suggestions from this study around improving the situation are therefore as follows:

- There is a need for the development and implementation of gender-sensitive policies that consider the complexities of family migration, specifically those that consider the integration needs of female migrants. Family-aligned policies should consider the need to foster the mobility of both lead and accompanying spouses. The policy framework should consider the inadvertent impacts of reinforcing traditional gender roles and fostering the re-domestication of accompanying spouses caused by assigning 'dependant' status, as demonstrated above. From the sending country's side, migrants entering the country may be best advised about the structure of the South African labour market, prospects of employment and the possibility of the tertiary qualifications they could acquire to meet critical shortage skills in the market. This will ensure maximum contribution in the host country

and the full benefits of remittances back to the sending country, that is, preplanning is suggestive of better integration outcomes.

- South African integration programmes should consider local language training in any of the main languages deemed important for LMI, such as Afrikaans and isiZulu.

Limitations and recommendations

In the family migration context, the trajectories of accompanying spouses are to some extent mutually interlinked with that of their partners. However, in this study, the views of the male migrant spouses were not directly solicited as the specific focus was on female accompanying spouses. As a qualitative case design was utilised, the results were not set out to be statistically generalisable as with survey research; however, internal generalisability and case-to-case generalisability were inferred. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study necessitated in-depth probing to gain deep insights, which was achieved with a relatively small group of participants. Labour market integration research is highly context-specific, although some aspects of this research may apply broadly to other contexts in the Global South.

Suggestions for further research include the use of a large-scale survey or mixed-methods research, incorporating a larger number of participants, focusing on specific industries, for example, a male-dominated industry, and garnering the perspectives of women's labour market experiences in these industries, as well as focusing more pertinently on women who failed to integrate themselves in the labour market and the specific reasons why they failed.

Conclusion

The global development agenda for women, as demonstrated through the Sustainable Development Goals and the global compact for migration, emphasises the imperative for gender equality and the need for the empowerment of all women. This includes female migrants arriving in host countries. Legislative instruments that perpetuate gender inequality and precarity in the labour market should therefore be scrutinised, as LMI is a key social process with long-term ramifications for societal integration and children's integration.

The accompanying spouses who participated in this study showed a significant level of precarity owing to their subjectification as dependants and followers, which suggests the need to interrogate further how this important but obscured group of migrants could be supported with greater efficiency through programmes of integration. Policies are a means to rights, and this is a key recognition for women whose vulnerability may be exacerbated in the process of migration. The full integration of migrant women into the labour market suggests greater benefits for the host country in the form of contributions to the economy as well as social cohesion. For the female accompanying spouse, full LMI suggests improved socio-economic and even psychological well-being.

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