



Illegal migrant Basotho women in South Africa: Exposure to vulnerability in domestic services



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The illegal migration of Basotho women to South Africa in order to render domestic service is alarming because they are subjected to harsh treatment. This is a pastoral and theological concern for the church. As migrants, their struggle begins from the household circumstances that often force them to leave and seek job opportunities undocumented or without following prescribed migration procedures. They are then subjected to migration processes and procedures: for example, corruption and bribery by migration officers and illegal dealers (*lirurubele*). The working and living conditions in South Africa are often uncondusive for illegal migrants. As economic and illegal migrants, they are often considered as lesser by prejudiced employers who treat them inhumanely. Accessing essential services also imposes a significant threat to their lives.

Contribution: Through this study, the article will reveal the vulnerability faced by illegal migrant Basotho women as domestic workers in South Africa.

Keywords: illegal migrants; domestic workers; Basotho women; vulnerability; Lesotho; South Africa.

Introduction

For the longest time, the scripture is very honest about what it means to be human, and as a result, it shares the stories of several different people movements. The biblical stories are a migration itself. The scripture begins with God's spirit migrating over the water followed by God, who created all the creatures on earth and made a man a caretaker of his creatures. God said, 'Let us create humankind, male and female, in our own image ...' (Gn 1:26). As God created all people in his image and likeness, all people including women are obliged to treat each other with dignity and honour.

God is making his people aware that if they treat each other with dignity and honour even their basic human rights will be enough for everybody. God created the fruits of the earth so that people would have enough to live: God also said, 'See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food' (Gn 1:29). If the fruits of the earth have been given by God, so that everybody on earth would have enough to live, it means that every person has the right to life, food, clothing, work, shelter and personal possessions.

For human beings to live according to their God-given dignity and honour, it is important for them to have more than food, clothing, work, shelter and possessions. For the people to live according to their dignity, they need the freedom of thoughts and freedom of movement that is to move from one place to another. We are part of God's migration. If we embrace Adam and Eve as our first parents, we are all migrants in a strange land and very far from home, which is the Garden of Eden. It is very clear from the scripture that we are all the migrants in this world. From the biblical stories and in the contemporary world, immigration and migration have been occurring, amongst other factors because of war, economic crisis, natural disasters and socio-cultural trends.

The issue of illegal migration in South Africa has been there for a long period. Historically, some Basotho men used to cross the South African borders illegally to work in the mines, but that did not lead to exposure to vulnerability. During the discovery of mines in South Africa in the late 1800s, South Africa was still under the political apartheid regime. Immigration policies that were in place favoured foreign labour (Tati 2008:423–440). Besides political motives, the apartheid

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industrial regulations perceived migration as a source of cheap labour (Friedman 2014:122).

It was then that the high demands for labour in the mines attracted more economic migrants from neighbouring countries such as Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and Mozambique. Lesotho citizens migrated to South Africa in large numbers as economic migrants because of drought and decreasing agricultural production (Modo 2001:443–452). The experience of Basotho citizens is relevant to that of Isaac who migrated to Gerar because of famine in the land as an Alien (Gn 26:2). Slavery and trafficking are seen when Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and was transported to Egypt.

Initially, in traditional Basotho communities, migration conditions only favoured Basotho men to cross to South Africa for work, whereas Basotho women stayed at home raising kids and continuing with subsistence activities (Modo 2002:378). Modo further shows that besides the Basotho patriarchal norms, harsh working environments in South Africa and black labour laws restricted women from working in mines. However, neither those regulations nor patriarchal norms prevented Basotho women from crossing to South Africa for job opportunities. Basotho women initially had opportunities to work in farms as beer-brewers, prostitutes, domestic workers and traders in South Africa. From the 1930s, Basotho women already got entry into South African urban areas, and in the second half of the 20th century, there were increasingly high numbers of black women migrants as domestic workers in white homes (Phillips & James 2014:410–431). Most of these women are migrating from Lesotho because of poverty, unemployment and socio-cultural factors in their homes.

The struggle of illegal migrant Basotho women is a pastoral and theological concern in the sense that it is duty of the Church leaders or pastors to make sure that the rights of the illegal migrants are protected. The Church cannot remain silent when faced with cases of injustice in society. Any case of silence by the Church can be understood to be consent or support for the oppressors. The Church is free to challenge anybody, organisation, institution or government authority when her people are treated unjustly. The church must stand on the side of the needy by providing a prophetic voice, especially to the illegal migrant Basotho women.

The Church has to learn from the scripture how the prophets were fighting for the rights of the needy. The prophets came forward as God's messengers of justice. God sent them to put right what had gone wrong in the Israel under the kings. Prophet Jeremiah reminds those who were in power during his days about their obligations. He explained clearly that strangers, orphans and widows, and the needy should be treated with dignity and honour:

Thus says the Lord, do what is right and just. Rescue the victims from the hand of his oppressor. Do not wrong or oppress the resident alien, the orphan, or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place. (Jr. 22:3)

From many academic literature and socio-economic reports, migrant women often choose domestic work as the only acceptable way to go abroad for a better life. Sometimes their movements are illegal like most of the Basotho women to South Africa as it is the case in this article. Most of the academic literatures have been concentrating on the roles of women in the informal sector in South Africa, changing economic and social trends in Lesotho that prompt women to join the labour force. However, little has been explored academically on repercussions women face in their endeavours to earn a living, such as those exposing themselves to vulnerability. Some authors including the likes of Stenbock-Hult and Sarvimaki (2011:31); Wolf et al. (2013:55) define vulnerability as being threatened by harmful conditions and occurrences and a possibility of future harm to one's emotional or physical being. Basotho women working in domestic services in South Africa, who procedurally move into South Africa, are just a fraction of other migrant women who cross the Lesotho-South Africa border. With both Lesotho and South African governments doing little to secure the border controls, people on both sides still have channels to access informal border crossings in order to travel from one country to another.

By December 2020, South Africa reported 861 000 women working as domestic workers and representing a significant source of employment (Stats SA 2020). However, the domestic industry statistics of Basotho women working in South Africa, either legally or illegally, are hardly kept. Basotho domestic workers in South Africa are also fragmented in a manner that there is limited sharing of information and ideas amongst themselves and no trade unions advocate for their rights. These current working conditions and other socio-economic factors driving these women raise an element of exposure to risk in their quest for income and better livelihood. This article highlights the understanding of migration and illegal migrant of Basotho women and push factors for Basotho women that make them search for domestic job opportunities in South Africa, their journey to and from South Africa and working conditions that expose them to vulnerability.

What is migration?

There is no generally or specifically accepted definition of a migrant. The International Organization for Migration describes:

[A] migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his or her habitual place of residence. Further distinctions are commonly made between legal status, whether movement is voluntary, the cause of movement and length of stay. (Mbiyozo 2018:4)

South Africa is regarded as a destination for many people from neighbouring countries who have migrated for job opportunities and other socio-political factors. Therefore, this is called for great attention to migration in this article.

Bartram, Poros and Monforte (2014:4) refer to migration as 'a relocation of individuals to some distant place that is at least beyond one's own city or town'. It is also a term that can be

defined in international terms as 'the movement of people to another country' (Bartram et al. 2014:4). Migration to South Africa from its neighbours has been occurring predominantly, leading to either permanent residence of migrants or temporary settlement of migrants. This is because of poor economic backgrounds in their home countries that drive them to enter the labour and trade markets of South Africa legally or illegally, seeking improved economic and survival opportunities.

At first, migration to South Africa was only dominated by men, but because of economic and socio-cultural transitions followed by a decline in miners' retrenchment, women are then seen to be increasingly migrating on their own and some as sole breadwinners in their families (Andall 2018:4). A lot of Basotho families headed by men perceived mine work as a way out from poverty, and they were able to maintain a good lifestyle but the situation took a 'downturn'. Employment of Basotho men in South African mines declined because of the high preference of employing South Africans and the reduction in job opportunities in the formal sector that forced a rise in large-scale retrenchment (Segatti & Landau 2011:20). Migrant Basotho men were not an exception to this mass retrenchment in the mines.

The retrenchment of Basotho men forced most of the Basotho women to leave their families and go to South Africa to work in the domestic services. They left their children in Lesotho with their relatives and care for the households and children of other people. Their absence from their families affects the church and community at large. These women are only concerned about the financial well-being of their families, whilst the physical and spiritual well-being of their families are compromised.

What is fundamental to them is the payment that they earn because it helps them provide for their families:

Domestic work is neither socially nor intellectually fulfilling but is chosen for domestic reasons. Domestic workers clean up the dirt and mess of non-family members. They provide love and care to the children of others while their own children are cared for by their family members in another country. (Burn 2005:175)

The conditions of the migrant domestic traumatise, as one woman was deeply disturbed by the conversation of young people who were playing.

I heard children playing; they are playing in the house. The other child said, 'I am a Daddy', the other child said, 'I am a Mummy', and then 'She is a Filipina [*Mosotho*]'. Therefore, what does the child mean, even the child knows or it's already learning that if you are a Filipina [*Mosotho*] you are a servant inside the house. While there are economic and demographic reasons for the demand for cheap domestic workers to perform 'necessary work', migrant domestic workers also reproduce and confirm the status hierarchy. Much of the work of migrant domestic workers, both carers and cleaners, is taken up with sustaining otherwise unsustainable life-styles. (Burn 2005:174)

This is just an example of how migrant women are treated in some households and how they are viewed as lesser by

prejudiced employers who do not treat them as fully human. We can imagine when they are illegal migrants, which is the main concern of this article. The level of exposure to vulnerability in the domestic services is unbearable.

Illegal migration

According to Haines and Rosenbum (1999:1), 'illegal migrant' was a phrase used to classify poor jobs of greedy people who are desperately in need of any means to earn income for their survival. These people travel from their home countries and enter the labour and trade market in a foreign country unlawfully. This justifies the illegal migration of most migrant Basotho women in the domestic services who have migrated to South Africa unlawfully. The familiar preference is usually called undocumented though a large number of illegal migrants do have documents permitting them to migrate to a foreign country.

Undocumented people are fond of acting 'illegally' from the moment they arrive in the foreign country up until they reach their workplaces, and their presence in the country of a host country makes them vulnerable to punishments of migration violations that can include 'overstaying visas, illegal entry, illegal employment or illegally re-entering the country subsequent to deportation' (Barsky 2016:1). This exposes the undocumented to vulnerability, irrespective of whether they have been in the host country for a short period, a few decades or for as long as they can remember. 'When migrants arrive in the host country, they enter a social discourse that is most likely negative with regard to "illegal" immigrants' (Barsky 2016:36). Most of these negative social discourses with regard to illegal migrants especially Basotho women are caused by the financial crisis and immigration rules of South Africa. Illegal migration happens primarily because South Africa does not provide work permits to low-skilled or unskilled migrants. Migrants have adopted a variety of methods to cross borders and stay in South Africa. Migrants have adopted a variety of methods to cross borders and stay in South Africa. These include the following :

- Crossing on a legal permit and either overstaying or returning home regularly to renew.
- Falsely claiming asylum on entry without a legitimate case as a means of staying and working until claims are assessed.
- Entering clandestinely.
- Obtaining false documents, including South African IDs or passports.
- Most work permits in South Africa go to skilled migrants from outside the region (Mbiyozo 2018:9).

Push factors to illegal migration of Basotho women to South Africa

The changing of socio-economic factors in South Africa especially in the mining industry, where many Basotho men were working have affected Basotho men and their families negatively. The majority of them were retrenched, and work opportunities in the mines were given to South African

citizens. Basotho men had no option apart from going back to Lesotho. Most Basotho households had unemployed spouses, which caused the majority of female migration from Lesotho to South Africa as large numbers of women got out to work in domestic services. A rise in illegal Basotho women migration was therefore pushed by amongst other factors: South Africa's position to Lesotho, unemployment, poverty and undocumented labour force.

South Africa position to Lesotho

South Africa being the only neighbouring country to Lesotho, it becomes the destination of first resort for anyone intending to escape the country for whatever reason. Moreover, South Africa still remains the economy hub in Southern Africa and the second largest economy in Africa, which attracts foreigners from other African countries and worldwide. Basotho women therefore join these masses, with efforts to offer domestic services. From history as well, during the colonial era, Lesotho had been established to be a labour reserve economy, and it was manifested as most Basotho's survival still relies on wages from South Africa (Moyo 2020:113–124).

Unemployment

Research findings and history show that Lesotho initially began relying on South Africa for employment, from when diamond mining got established in Kimberly (Rants'o 2016:317). Even in South African mines, Lesotho proportionally had the highest representation amongst other neighbouring countries with immigrants at the South African mines (Ehrlich et al. 2017:93). To then curb the unemployment in Lesotho, women then resort to migrating to South Africa. They are then perfect candidates for domestic work because, traditionally, from a young age, Basotho girls are exposed to domestic and household chores such as cooking, laundry and collecting water. These are tasks that require unskilled labour and are currently employable in South Africa; however, their employment is also dependable on possessing documentation to legally cross to South Africa and get employed.

Lesotho statistics of unemployed youth and women are alarming to such an extent that masses are fleeing. South Africa is also facing high rates of unemployment, such that skilled Basotho women are faced with unskilled labour jobs. These are also used as a bridge for exploring other economic and business ventures in South Africa, whilst they hide for other harsh conditions brought by migrating illegally to South Africa.

Poverty

In 2019, the World Bank reports that 75% of the Lesotho population lived below the poverty line and had a high unemployment rate (World Bank 2019). This also has decreased the nation's life expectancy. Many families are obviously faced with economic vulnerability; this is where migrant Basotho women have left their homes to

South Africa and stay for extended periods for work and accumulate money before going home. Because of their bravery, the labour market in South Africa is known to be outstanding as many households are in need of their services. They hook each other up to work as domestic workers to such an extent that some women resign from textile industries in Lesotho for greener pastures and move for South Africa's domestic work. Those undocumented (i.e. those without valid passports) still illegally cross into South Africa through unpatrolled borders.

Undocumented labour force

Even after the decline in mine employment, migration in South Africa is still regarded lively because of its economic feature of being the 'economic pillar' in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region (Global Migration Data Portal 2021). This issue has pulled more migrant Basotho women (young and old), mostly with no migration experience, to cross borders and seek employment in South Africa's domestic services. It is a requirement that to cross the Lesotho-South Africa border one must have a valid passport, cross the border at authorised border crossing points and hold a valid work permit to work in South Africa. With that being the requirement and anything against this, one will be an illegal migrant. However, not all Basotho migrants follow the required terms to work in South Africa.

Corruption is also a concerning issue with immigration officers; it costs about M150 bribery to officials and illegal border dealers known as *lirurubele*. They are illegal dealers at the border known for assisting illegal migrants to cross the border at the border gate at a paid fee or assist them swimming through Mohokare River – dividing the two countries. It is difficult for Lesotho citizens to get a work permit to work in South Africa and some of those who remain undocumented or willing to avoid some border control procedure easily skip the country through shallow rivers and unfenced territories on unpatrolled areas (Aerni-Flessner 2018:758–783).

South Africa in the SADC region is a country with the 'principal migrant-receiving' feature, which contributes to its implementation of a bilateral agreement with neighbouring countries in governing the migration process (SADC Migration Labour Policy 2013:3). It was a way of regulating the in and out movement of migrants between countries, especially those who enter to take part in the trade or labour market. Also, as part of documenting and regularising the stay of Basotho migrant workers and students, the South African Department of Home Affairs introduced Lesotho Special Permit (L.S.P.) now known as Lesotho Exemption Permit (L.E.P.).

For someone who migrated to South Africa illegally and without a valid passport had a national ID, it is impossible, unless through other corrupt means and bribery, to get the L.E.P. for employment. It is a requirement to have a valid passport, Lesotho national ID card and evidence of employment.

Exposure to vulnerability

In understanding vulnerability, Miller et al. (2010:11), in their work, agree that vulnerability encompasses encounters of proneness to harm, future threat, exposure to shocks and stressors. Some of the socio-economic factors then driving Basotho women to join the domestic workforce in South Africa illegally can potentially influence human vulnerability to the workers themselves. They are exposed to vulnerabilities including discrimination, forced labour, human trafficking, abuse, deprived access to information and restricted ability to leave or move. All these forms of vulnerabilities are based on 'migration status' as one of the pushing factors exposing migrant Basotho women to the aforementioned vulnerabilities as it is the case with other domestic migrants (International Labour Organization 2018:11).

Discrimination

Focusing on discrimination, migrant Basotho women are vulnerable to discrimination as they are not nationals in South Africa. From a study by Faturiyee et al. (2018), 23.8% of HIV-positive Basotho migrants to South Africa defaulted their medical treatment solely because they were afraid to visit health centers because they were illegal migrants. Reasons surrounding this matter include having some for South African service facilities requiring migrants to present their valid legal documents before being granted service and resistance to attend to undocumented migrants.

When it comes to the remuneration payment, the illegality of these women often exposes them to high chances of being underpaid because they lack legal documents, which give them access to work in South Africa. Their employers also discriminate them by not giving them written employment contracts that outline their job responsibilities as domestic workers. They therefore lack job descriptions. This is not the case with almost all South African domestic workers because their employers observe domestic workers' rights. For instance, they have written employment contracts outlining terms and conditions of work, and they also earn the legal minimum wage of domestic workers and are not subjected to forced labour because as citizens, they know their rights as domestic workers.

Exploitation of labour and abuse

The migrant Basotho women are subjected to forced labour because of their illegal status. This exposes these women to violation of their rights as domestic workers when they reach their workplaces, and it is common practice with most migrant Basotho women. The employers also tend to characterise migrant Basotho women as very powerful and obedient when it comes to them being given more workloads, from the experience of Makoro (2015). These women are forced into more work such that they end up doing what is far different from their prescribed jobs and are never compensated for doing overtime or additional work. Forced labour usually persists because of the power imbalance

between the employer and the employee as illegal migrants are not in a position to negotiate fair wages, required working hours and scope of tasks.

They are exposed to domestic violence, resulting in physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Employers seem to take advantage of the illegality of the migrant Basotho women and victimise them hoping they have nowhere to report because of their illegal status. This is then where the employee will also be vulnerable to emotional and verbal abuse.

Working in isolation

Illegal migrant domestic workers who work in isolation are often vulnerable to a lack of information and assistance. Being known and identified as an illegal migrant in South Africa means the risk of being deported or bribing police (Hlatshwayo 2019). Avoiding these cases forces illegal migrant Basotho women in the same situation to limit their movement, socialising with precaution and restrictions for searching for better job opportunities.

Participants in the South African domestic service industry are already fragmented, implying they cannot collectively advocate and defend better working conditions. The case is then worse for illegal migrants. Basotho women working as domestic workers remain isolated and vulnerable on their own.

Human trafficking and abduction

Migrant Basotho women are also vulnerable to human trafficking because of their national status of being 'illegal migrants'. In most cases, these women migrate in desperation for work and endure the risk of migrating to South Africa without a concrete idea or plan of the kind of job they will get. Even if they are recruited, they risk being trafficked or abducted into illegal duties. They often migrate in groups when going to seek jobs believing they will all qualify for domestic work. Some find satisfying job opportunities, whilst others end up being victims of human trafficking or forced marriages. In some parts of Pretoria, there are self-claimed agencies whereby migrant women are put in one residence hoping that they will one day be employed. Clients of such agencies prioritise selecting women of their choice to work for them, and not all clients are reliable. Some employ women to use them to make money by selling them as sex workers, whilst some marry them forcefully.

The Church and migrants

The Church has always been on the side of the suffering souls. It supports people who are uprooted from their own land and those from families forcefully separated or forced by an economic crisis such as illegal migrant Basotho women. The Church acts as a voice for the voiceless. It is concerned about the anguish of those without any security, at the mercy of every kind of mistreatment or abuse. It is the duty of the Church to

remind those who abuse illegal migrant Basotho in domestic services in South Africa that they need to protect them as it is said in the book of Exodus: 'You shall remember that you are slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore, I command you to do this' (Ex 24:18).

During the time of the apartheid era, most of the South African people were in exile, especially in Lesotho. They were protected as Lesotho does not have a refugee camp where they can put them but rather accommodated them in their families so that they can feel at home. It was a sign of fraternity as Christ stipulated it well in the scripture that:

[T]he foremost is, hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. 'The second is this, you shall love your neighbour as yourself'. (Mk 13:34–35)

In Jesus Christ's teaching, we learn that our relationship with our fellow brothers and sisters is inseparable from our relationship with God. This message of Christ is supposed to be the prophetic voice of the Church towards those who mistreat illegal migrant Basotho so that they cannot be the victims of abuse and vulnerability especially when Lesotho practiced the acts of mercy during the time of apartheid era. The church is also an institute that serves the society. It has to promote justice and mercy. The issue of the illegal migrant should be handled with care and concern as the pastoral functions of the Church are therapeutic in themselves. They intend to foster change and promote human and spiritual health and maturity. (Louw 2008:76). The care of the illegal migrant Basotho women is the core of humanity.

The church is always working towards unity and harmony as she stated that:

God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. So also it has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals, without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people ... this solidarity must be constantly increased until that day on which it will be brought to perfection. (Flannery 1965:32)

Methodology

The issues of illegal migrant Basotho women are a pastoral concern because they affect the Church and the society at large. As a scientific discipline, practical theology has a method. It gives a scientific starting point in dealing with the real experience of human life. The exposure to the vulnerability of the migrant Basotho women in the domestic services is the pastoral concern. It fosters the practical role of critical theological reflection on the whole praxis of the Church, which is at the same time the material and final object of its study. The work of theology in its practicality is the real principle and historical situations of the Church. This is also the method God uses in liberating humanity:

I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and I have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them ...' (Ex 3:7–8)

This method is a shepherding.

Shepherding is a model that Gerkin used as the triological leadership structure of how priests, prophets, wise men and women jointly took the leadership of shepherding God's people in the Old Testament. He says:

[T]he priests, a hereditary class that had particular responsibility for worship and ceremonial life; the prophets, who spoke for Yahweh in relation to moral issues, sometimes rebuking the community and its stated political leaders; and the wise men and women, who offered counsel of all sorts concerning issues of the good life and personal conduct. (Gerkin 1997:23)

From the above triological functions, it is the responsibility of the shepherds of the souls to use them as one and not as separate in the ministry of pastoral care. This is also vital in counseling the illegal migrants Basotho women in the domestic services as to help them avoid exposure to vulnerability.

The profound method that the Church pursues in its efforts to articulate the theological grounds of practical living in various areas such as work, abuse, sexuality, marriage, youth, aging and death (Rn 11:32). It entails learning the languages of the other in order to serve relevantly and effectively. Wimberly (2003) emphasised that:

[P]ositive conversation enables us to evaluate ourselves in positive ways. Our social involvement and discourse with others provide us with opportunities to take into ourselves either bad or good sources of self – evaluation, particularly in the early phases of our lives. (p. 17)

For instance, the perspective of pastoral care as shepherding in terms of healing, guiding, sustaining and reconciling has been learned from the Protestant theologians.

The history of salvation as narrated in biblical scriptures and the Church's tradition manifests God's providential care and love for his people. Therefore, service in the Church is best understood as shepherding or pastoral care. The care giver is a shepherd (pastor) as we learn from Jesus Christ who referred to himself as the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11–16). The qualities of a shepherd across many socio-cultural communities are fundamental and all who aspire to be pastors ought to learn from Jesus Christ as the perfect shepherd.

Pastoral care is a well-regarded image used in Christian history to refer to shepherding that involves healing, sustaining, nurturing, guiding and reconciling. The message needs to meet people where they are and illustrated by an example from a life known by them. The use of modern methods and expressions helps this aim. The shepherds of the souls have the ability to handle their own brokenness with integrity to demonstrate honest endeavor as well as unashamed repentance, enables the illegal migrant Basotho women to share as fellow travelers in pilgrimage than to see themselves as inferior Christians chastised by an infallible external authority. The shepherds of the faithful souls should preach in the context of worship whose whole liturgy reflects and is in sympathy with

pastoral concern. Preaching the reconciliation to God in Christ in such worship sustains nurtures, heals those gathered and gives an opportunity for response (Campbell 1981:215).

Some of the immediate responsibilities of a shepherd/pastoral care giver include providing food for the sheep, protecting from danger and enemies and uniting (keeping together). A shepherd has to know and be with their sheep, be committed to them and be ready to offer defense and protection in order for the illegal migrant Basotho women to be safe and protected. They need the protection and care of the pastors or priests. The priests are intended to be the shepherds after the Heart of Christ by showing love and concern to the point of the total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. Therefore, the priests as the shepherds must be Christ like towards illegal migrant Basotho women.

The term shepherd is used critically and analogically in reference to people because we are not strictly sheep. Also all the believers who provide pastoral care fit to be called shepherds. Therefore the shepherd is a prime image for understanding and carrying out ministry in the Church and society. The qualities that are embraced are those that consist of genuine feeling and concern for others with the view of responding to their needs (liberating/transforming their lives). This means that pastoral care entails exerting influence and maximising the potential for others to live holistically (free, personal, hopeful, etc.).

Pastoral care requires various skills depending on the needs of those being cared for. The rule of thumb is that genuine pastoral care is a blending of feeling and skill. The knowledge and the skills necessary can be acquired through training. Pastoral care is usually within a Christian community and may involve the person-to-person relationships as in counseling or personal visits. It may also involve a small group or community relationships. Abilities of listening, empathy, consensus building, conflict resolution, etc. are important. Basically pastoral care ordinarily focuses on Church members although it can be extended to the society. Caution ought to be taken not to place all pastoral responses under pastoral caregiving. Issues of political, economic, military or cultural nature are better handled in terms of social ethics, peace and justice, social mission or outreach.

Conclusion

The illegal migrant Basotho women in South African domestic services tend to be voiceless individuals with broken souls from unbearable backgrounds. As strangers in a foreign land, they need to be uplifted by the shepherds as it is their core responsibility to be the voice of the voiceless by offering a pastoral care. It is through which that hope and positivity will be instilled in them and give them motivation that they lack from their work places. From all the sacrifices these women have made with their families,

whenever they are at work they have to feel at home and that is possible through the unity influenced by shared humanity as God 'makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good' (Mt 5:45).

The church through its teachings advocates for harmonious treatment of individuals wherever they meet each other and no one deserves unfair treatment. Professionalised pastoral care can act as a suitable catalyst in reinforcing love for one another in the domestic services. Just like Jesus Christ has shown love for his people, also the employers of illegal migrants have to treat them with brotherly love not as subjects of abusive practices whom they can mistreat as they please. Shepherds also need to play a master role in vulnerable illegal migrant Basotho women by offering emotional protection and support to them so that they do not feel and consider themselves neglected sheep. Also looking from the fact that they are traumatised beings from their backgrounds and travelling experiences, illegal migrant Basotho women have the right to a sense of belonging like any other worker in South Africa.

The foundation of the Church's shepherding is deeply rooted in the African concept of 'ubuntu', which it should promote and should not do what is alien to African culture. This encompasses the friendly treatment of illegal migrant Basotho women in the domestic services as from the bible 'we find a reason why our hearts should expand to embrace the foreigner' (Pope Francis 2020:16) for we are also strangers in this world. This article therefore calls for further research on how shepherding and pastoral care through the Church can heal wounded souls of illegal migrants in South Africa to decrease their vulnerability.

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Competing interests

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Authors' contributions

M.B.M. is the main author of the article. M.J.M. is the supervising professor who guided the author in the writing of the article.

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