

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores existing migration pathways women from Lesotho use to secure employment as domestic workers in South Africa. After shedding light on such pathways, it goes further and attempts to determine if these migration pathways have discernible influence on their conditions of work. Using snowball sampling technique, data was collected telephonically from 15 Basotho migrant domestic workers based in South Africa. Interview guide was used as a tool to assist the researcher on the main questions, and data was analysed using thematic analysis method. The study establishes four main themes. Firstly, it unveils the motives behind Basotho migrant domestic workers' decision to leave home. Secondly, it identifies five pathways participants in this study used to secure employment. Thirdly, it highlights the combination of strategies they use both for employment attainment and continuity. Lastly, it unpacks conditions of work as a framework and uses them to form an analysis of how migration pathways of Basotho domestic workers shape their conditions of work. It concludes that migrant domestic workers who used regular pathways generally share the same conditions with their irregular counterparts, challenging the assumption that by merely holding legal documents, workplace experiences improve. It further adds that, although these migration pathways do not necessarily have direct cause-effect relationship to their conditions at work, they provide a conducive ground for their unfavourable working experiences.

Key words: Migrant domestic worker, migration pathways, conditions at work.