THE EFFECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COVID-19 RELATED RESPONSE ON MIGRANT WOMEN LIVING IN CAPE TOWN: ASSESSING THE COLONIALITY OF CITIZENSHIP IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA AND THE POTENTIAL FOR A NEW CITIZENSHIP PARADIGM

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, the existing system continues to preserve unequal gendered citizenship rights based on colonial and apartheid hierarchies. Despite a rights based legal platform, the state reproduces racism, xenophobia and patriarchy, creating a multitude of vulnerabilities for black migrant women due to their triple discrimination. The Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions have deepened global inequality, exacerbating the vulnerabilities experienced by the most marginalised people in society, both highlighting and reinforcing discrimination according to race, gender, class and nationality. This has been seen in governments' pandemic responses around the world, which have prioritised exclusion over solidarity. South Africa is a prime example of how the government's response has worsened the exclusion and violence to which these marginalised groups are exposed. Through qualitative interviews with migrant women living in Cape Town using an intersectional and feminist approach, this research evaluated the effects of the South African government's response to Covid-19, uncovering how it has exacerbated pre-existing structural inequality and violence, increasing the vulnerabilities faced by migrant women living in Cape Town. Despite this pronounced precarity as a result of the response, the findings revealed how such experiences of vulnerability were nothing new to the participants. Rather, their experiences of exclusion constitute continuity of the existing system. Through this investigation, this research has revealed how the experiences of migrant women are symptomatic of the enduring *coloniality of citizenship* in South Africa, which has institutionalised their exclusion from citizenship.

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Abbreviations And Acronyms

DHA	Department of Home Affairs
ID	Identity Document
GBV	Gender based violence
GCRO	Gauteng City Region Observatory
LHR	Lawyers for Human Rights
NAP	National Action Plan to combat racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSP-GBV	National Strategic Plan on gender-based violence and femicide
RRO	Refugee reception office
SRD	Social Relief of Distress grant
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund

Migration Terms Glossary

Asylum Seekers: Persons who have fled their country of origin and are seeking recognition and protection as a refugee in South Africa, but whose applications are still under review.

Economic Migrants: An oversimplified term used to describe persons who leave their country of origin purely for economic reasons to achieve material improvements in their livelihoods, understood as unrelated to refugees, but overlooking the complex factors that influence migration.

Migrants: An inclusive term for people moving from one place to another, in this thesis used to refer to all black Africans falling under the above migration categories, recognising the complex factors that influence people's decisions to migrate and addressing the harmful binary framing of victim/choice in political discourse.

Refugees: Persons who flee their country due to their well-founded fear of persecution and are recognised as such by Department of Home Affairs, thus granting them legal asylum status and protection in the Republic of South Africa.

Special Permit Holders: Those with an Angolan Dispensation, a Zimbabwean or Lesotho Exemption Permit.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions have deepened global inequality, and illuminated hierarchies that continue to plague society (Ryan & Ayadi, 2020). In South Africa these hierarchies were made abundantly clear through the government's response, which failed to consider the most vulnerable in society, prioritising exclusion and the interests of the elite minority (Garba & Willie, 2020). The Bill of Rights Chapter 2, Section 7-39 (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108, 1996) entrenches the right to freedom of movement, dignity, security of persons, and access to housing, healthcare, and education for everyone in South Africa. However, for migrant women living in South Africa, these legal provisions are meaningless, as they face a multitude of barriers that prevent them from accessing and actualising these rights (Amnesty International, 2019).

By applying an intersectional lens, primarily in relation to poverty, gender and citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 2007), this research aims to evaluate the effects of the South African government's response to Covid-19, and whether it has exacerbated pre-existing structural inequality and violence, increasing the vulnerabilities faced by migrant women living in Cape Town. Additionally, by examining the gendered effects of the Covid-19 related regulations, as well as the marginalisation of those constructed as non-citizens, this research intends to understand whether the government policies can be seen as (re)inforcing an unequal and gendered citizenship regime in South Africa – *a coloniality of citizenship.*[1] The temporality of migrant women's access to citizenship is also examined in order to determine whether the government's response can be seen as a divergence from the existent citizenship paradigm, or whether it merely mirrors the established citizenship discourse and practice in South Africa.

Pandemics, while causing immense devastation, also create the potential for rupture, exposing the unsustainability of the existing order and providing an opportunity to challenge unequal structures (Roy, 2020: 214). This research also aims to evaluate moments of dissent, whereby the *coloniality of citizenship* is challenged through

[1] The term *coloniality of citizenship* is taken from Boatcă & Roth (2016) and used conceptually throughout the paper. I have italicised it as key theoretical framing and terminology throughout my argument.

assertions of agency by migrant women, amongst their realities of deprivation, as well as through instances of solidarity between migrant women and South African citizens. This may provide inspiration and guidance in paving the way towards imagining a new citizenship paradigm in South Africa.

Locating research within existing literature

This section examines citizenship and migration policy from a historical perspective in order to understand their significance as determinants of inequality and exclusion, not just in South Africa, but on a global scale. Following a global historical overview of these concepts and how they have been applied, I turn to conceptualising migration and xenophobia in South Africa in order to uncover the meaning that citizenship takes on in a country with one of the most progressive constitutions, but where the majority of its population are subjected to daily exclusion and violence.

Coloniality of citizenship

Roth (2020:63) links citizenship in its colonial form to historical gendered global inequalities, and Boatcă & Roth (2016:191-192) concur, arguing the modern institution of citizenship accounts for extreme inequality by maintaining "the structural distribution of unequal and gendered citizenship rights". The roots of this lie in coloniality which dehumanises, classifies and subjectifies colonised people as less than human (Lugones, 2010:745). The resulting exploitative relations between colonisers and subjects preserve inequality, and are maintained through what Bashi, Treitler & Boatcă (in Stephens & Boonzaier, 2020:325) call the "coloniality of power", which continues to be enacted in various forms.

The "coloniality of power" (Stephens & Boonzaier, 2020:325) safeguards hierarchical relations based on socially constructed differences, which have historically been used to essentialize and objectivize colonial subjects in negative ways (Walsh, 2002: 67). Racial hierarchies were asserted through binaries of rational/irrational, primitive/civilised, traditional/modern, portrayed as natural and inherent (Coetzee, 2021: 96). These colonial binaries, which Walsh (2002:67) calls colonial difference were used not only to assert racial hierarchies and justify colonial domination but also as a strategy of indirect colonial rule to divide 'native[2]' populations into ordered

[2] The term 'native' is a colonial term with negative connotations. I use the term in quotation marks to indicate it's problematic nature.

categories of identity. Through this strategy, Mamdani (1996) argues, tribalism was instrumentally reinforced, if not created to facilitate the management and control of colonial subjects, maintained by "incorporating natives into a [colonial] state-enforced customary order" (Mamdani, 1996:18).

This colonial difference was enforced with the imposition of colonial borders created during the 1884/5 Berlin Conference which divided Africa between European states, paying no attention to existing patterns of settlement or groupings of indigenous people (Aniche & Moyo, 2022). The imposed borders were voted to be maintained by African states in 1963 and continue to be naturalised in post-colonial nation states with negative consequences (Hammer, 2021 Mamdani, 2020 Aniche & Moyo, 2022). Aniche and Mlambo (2022) argue that one of the negative consequences is the nurturing and promotion of xenophobic consciousness as a strategy suppressing class consciousness or revolutionary desire that can destabilise elite rule. Such consciousness has resulted in the casting out of the targets of xenophobic consciousness from the political community according to essentialised colonial identities (Hammer, 2021: 537).

Lugones (2008:16) coined the term the "modern colonial gender system" to describe how gender is equally significant to race in the performance of the "coloniality of power" (Stephens & Boonzaier, 2020:325). Coetzee (2021:96) concurs, arguing: "the universal classification of humans on the basis of race happens through gender and vice versa". Such a conclusion is drawn from the argument that "a logic of dichotomous, hierarchical categorisation" (Coetzee, 2021:97) underpins modern, colonial, capitalist thinking on race, gender and sexuality and, at the heart of this, is the binary of human/non-human. Thus, "the distinction between man and women becomes a mark of human", from which colonial subjects, reduced to "pure flesh", were excluded, imposing, not European gender arrangements, but a whole new gender system on the colonised (Coetzee, 2021:97). This, according to Lugones (2007:186):

> …created very different arrangements for colonised males and females than for white bourgeois coloniser men and women. Thus, it introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing.

Mechanisms of othering, employed in the "coloniality of power" (Stephens & Boonzaier, 2020:325) created colonised (black) women as inferior, primitive, exotic and innately sexual using gendered and racial logic (Boatcă & Roth, 2016:196-197). This created the racialized and gendered particularism of "the sexually threatening, eroticized and permanently available black female body, accordingly deprived of (the right to) protection and motherhood" (Boatcă & Roth, 2016:198), and against whom sexual violence has been naturalized (Coetzee, 2021:97). The colonial hierarchization of difference according to racialized, ethnicised and gendered criteria has situated certain bodies outside of civilization, not viewed as being fully human, and unable to participate as citizens unless white, male and heterosexual, justifying not only gender based violence, but racialized gender based violence (Lugones, 2008:16). The creation and justification of a system where certain bodies are protected colonial subjects and others are not at the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and citizenship is intrinsic to the ways colonial systems of power are maintained in the modern world (Boatcă & Roth, 2016:198). This is what Boatcă & Roth (2016) term the *coloniality of citizenship.* This term emphasises "the integral exclusionary dimension of citizenship as a category of belonging that simultaneously defines nonmembership" (Roth, 2020:66).

Conceptualising migration and xenophobia in South Africa

Notwithstanding the colonial arrival and other historical migrations of people (Mellet, 2020), South Africa in the past two centuries has a long history of migration, as African contract workers from the Southern African region have been crucial for servicing colonial and apartheid South Africa's mining and agricultural sector, contributing significantly to South Africa's economy (Everatt, 2011:12). Migrancy in the region ties directly to colonial rule, whereby cheap labour guaranteed the profitability of European private enterprise (Nshimbi, 2022). Historically, the migrant labour system has seen "the exploitation, through a capitalist economic system, of black labour institutionalised and enforced through the divide and rule policies of the system of apartheid" (Ekambaram, 2019: 218). As an antidote to this colonial racialised exploitation, South Africa's transformative constitutional design offered opportunity for a transformed society based on equality (Moseneke 2014:4). However, as Klotz (2000:831) notes, this did not necessarily change immigration policy, in fact

the post-apartheid state continued to pursue migration governance that closely resembles that of the 1913 Immigration Regulation Act, failing to overturn apartheid legacies.

In the decade following the 1994 election the volume of migrants from neighbouring African countries increased significantly, especially women both as a proportion of total migrants and in terms of absolute numbers (Mbiyozo, 2018: 3). South Africa's new democracy and progressive constitution seemingly offered greater economic opportunities, political stability and access to greater human rights, however, these hopes for a better future are quickly flattened, as migrants were and are subjected to exclusion, harassment and xenophobic attacks (Zanker & Moyo, 2020: 102). The current migration policy and practice of the South African government have shifted away from empathetic rights-based transformation, prioritised in the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), towards exclusion, encampment, and scapegoating "centred on continuing racialised forms of exploitation through the ubiquitous market" (Ekambaram, 2019: 218).

Public discourse also blames black foreigners for crime, job stealing and other negative influences (Chiumbu & Moyo, 2018:139; Hiropoulos, 2019). This kind of xenophobia was noted in the 1990s and did not merely emanate from post-apartheid state formation, as nationalist underpinnings of xenophobia suggest (Gordon, 2022). However, since 1994, it has steadily increased, as South Africa's heightened poverty and inequality, combined with slow economic growth and development, and hostile migration policies have contributed to circumstances in which xenophobia can flourish (Matsilele & Mpofu, 2022). Using data from the South African Attitudes Survey (SASAS), Gordon (2022: 60) highlights a commonly held view that illegal immigrants cause crime by pointing to the consistency of responses by the general populace between the period 2008 to 2018, where "two-thirds of the adult public saw foreign nationals as detrimental to public safety". Additionally, the 1998 survey found that 85% of the South African populace felt that migrants are not entitled to freedom of movement and speech, while 65% felt they should not enjoy police protection, or access to services (Valji, 2003). These sentiments were reaffirmed in a 2009 sample

survey by the Gauteng City Region Observatory (GCRO), where 69% of the respondents agreed or agreed strongly with the statement that "foreigners are taking benefits meant for South Africans". Moreover, when asked in SASAS 2016 if foreign nationals should obtain the same rights to social grants and services as citizens already living in the country, 47% of the adult public displayed, what Gordon (2022: 64) calls welfare chauvinism - "the unwillingness of the native-born to grant welfare rights to outsiders", while 27% displayed a "weaker"' form of chauvinism, backing welfare based on legal citizenship status. Such responses demonstrate how deeply animosity toward foreign African migrants runs in a significant segment of the general populace in South Africa (Gordon, 2022:64).

Xenophobic sentiment has often been accompanied by xenophobic violence and flare ups occur almost every year (Matsilele & Mpofu, 2022). Kaziboni (2022: 205) argues that the violence inherent in the apartheid system has laid the foundation for violence as a way of addressing grievances. Everatt (2011:8) encapsulates this:

> For fifteen years after democracy's birth, hostile attitudes towards and violence against African migrants were a barely reported but constant aspect of the South African landscape. Buried beneath the 'miracle' of the 'rainbow nation', they was like a sore tooth, a nagging, incessant but low-level continuance, which erupted in May 2008 in an orgy of violence.

Since 2008, xenophobic violence has increased and xenophobic attacks in South Africa have become both "familiar and well documented" (Mosselson, 2010:642). Between 2015–2016, it is estimated that 70 people died, over 100 were assaulted, nearly 600 foreign-run shops were looted and over 10,000 people were displaced due to xenophobic incidents (Hiropoulos, 2019:106). These acts of xenophobia resulted in few arrests and criminal prosecutions and have largely been met with silence and an absence of redress by state officials (Hiropoulos, 2019:106). Such a response is often perceived as a "tacit approval that migrants should leave the country" (Chiumbu & Moyo, 2018:139-140). Xenophobic sentiment has been repeatedly reinforced by South African politicians in order to gain public support and accumulate political capital, as well as to avoid accountability for state failures,

blaming black foreign migrants for a range of domestic ills (Hiropoulos, 2019:109; Zanker & Moyo, 2020:102).

In 2017, the Deputy Minister of Police, Bongani Mkongi, visited Hillbrow police station in Gauteng - a province with one of the highest levels of crime in the country. Following the visit, the Deputy Minister lamented in a media briefing: “How can a city in South Africa be 80% foreign nationals? [It] is dangerous that in Hillbrow and the surrounding areas South Africans have surrendered their own city to the foreigners ” (Editorial: Beware deputy top cop’s fascism, 2017). This is an example of how South African authorities invoke panic and fear of migration by grossly overstating the numbers of migrants, as well as associating high levels of crime with a large population of migrants. According to Hiropoulos (2019:110) police, like politicians, are using migrants as scapegoats when they are unable to account for rising crime levels in relation to higher budgets and a large police force.

Another common xenophobic stereotype is that hospitals, clinics and housing needs are being overrun by foreign nationals, compounding serious challenges to the provision of basic services to citizens (Hiropoulos, 2019). In reality, The Migration Data Portal (2021) estimates that roughly 4.8% of the population in South Africa are foreign-born and the number of migrants and refugees using public services is likely to be in line with this percentage, if not lower (The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, 2019). While migration has increased the government's large-scale service challenge, it is used as a convenient excuse for the failure of the local and national governments. Efforts to integrate migrants into mainstream social welfare service provision have been absent and multiple studies show that xenophobia has become institutionalised (Hiropoulos, 2019), resulting in the systemic exclusion of migrants in hospitals, housing and schools. Additionally, “few migrants are entitled to social grants, public housing or other direct state support” and thus, “overall, migrants, whether documented or not, rarely receive government services” (Hiropoulos, 2019:112).

The reproduction of xenophobic sentiment amongst the public, by public officials, often manifests in intense hatred and violence towards migrants (Gastrow, 2022:117). In many cases where xenophobic sentiment and violence are high, it is a result of

public officials and local leaders capitalising on negative views towards foreigners to gain political support. Hiropoulos substantiates (2019:112):

> There is ample evidence that organisers of xenophobic attacks are often political leaders who use community frustrations to mobilise support to take up popular causes. Their true motivation is often political or economic gain such as access to positions of power or 'lucrative council business'. Many times, xenophobic attacks are motivated by local power struggles. Outsiders are scapegoated and attacked as a way of empowering political factions, addressing disaffection or resolving local political competition.

The South African government continuously regards migrants with hostility, constructing them as a burden and a threat to the country, and blaming them for their failure to deliver basic services. The scapegoating and dehumanisation of migrants produce the belief that only South African citizens "should be entitled to freedoms, and these freedoms can only be realised by removing those not entitled to them" (Hiropoulos, 2019:116). Additionally, it has enabled harsh immigration policies and responses to migrant victimisation with no major objections from the general public (Hiropoulos, 2019:116). Threats and attacks against migrants are often ignored by South African Police Services (SAPS) and victims of xenophobic violence are blamed or persecuted. In June 2015, after an outbreak of xenophobic attacks, the government initiated Operation Fiela ('sweep clean' in Sesotho), implicitly promising "to rid neighbourhoods of unclean foreign criminals" (Gastrow, 2022:90). Instead of providing safety and justice to migrants in the face of heightened vulnerability and victimisation, the government's response attributed blame to those being persecuted by the attacks, rather than the attackers themselves. Operation Fiela "lit up the public imagination" by affirming and widening "perceptions of foreigners as polluting and pestilential" (Gastrow, 2022: 90-91), and confirming the validity of fears about harms brought about by foreigners[3]. This initiative resulted in the arrest of over 40,000 individuals between April and December and, by the end of 2015, over 15,000 migrants had been deported by the South African government. The operation

[3] Language is a central part of the problem of xenophobia. This term denotes otherness and reinforces the belief that migrants are outsiders of South African society.

demonstrated the state's supposed commitment to national well-being, appeasing the public's exclusionary fears for its own political gain (Hiropoulos, 2019:115). Moreover, the South African government's recent immigration initiatives reveal increasing hostility towards migrants, based on "themes of security, border control, and the use of law enforcement to manage migration" (Hiropoulos, 2019:115), similar to laws enforced under the apartheid regime's Aliens Control Act (96 of 1991) The continuous criminalization, dehumanisation and victimisation of migrants goes against the constitutional guarantees of economic and social rights for everyone in South Africa (Hiropoulos, 2019:117).

Conceptualising citizenship and xenophobia in South Africa

In order to understand the notion of citizenship in South Africa it must be located in the country's colonial history as a European outpost in which "South African white settlers worked on establishing white only citizenship and nationality and this meant eradicating and subjecting the black native" (Sibanda, 2022). According to Reddy (2015:84), these British colonial policies introduced central administrative structures, legal codes and Enlightenment ideas that became fundamental to the "apartheid … political order of state and society". Stephens and Boonzaier (2020: 327) argue that apartheid was a more formalised version of colonial power relations, legalising colonially engineered racial hierarchies which had implications for citizenship. Enacted in law, reinforced with violence (Reddy, 2015:83&151) the embeddedness of slavery, colonialism and apartheid "carries through into the current democratic context" (Gqola in Stephens & Boonzaier, 2020:328). Despite the democratic promise of "inclusiveness, tolerance and human rights" enshrined in its Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*,* Preamble, Act no. 108 of 1996), colonial difference remains inscribed into South Africa's social and political framework, firmly establishing exclusion (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:193).

According to Neocosmos (2006:68), "the apartheid state systematically manipulated citizenship in order to literally de-nationalise black South Africans, thus turning them into foreigners". Similarly, the post-apartheid state defined and demarcated non-belonging/'foreigners' in its state-nation formation, making indigeneity the exclusive conception of citizenship, denying the history of labour migration from neighbouring countries to prop up the economy (Everatt, 2011) and producing an essentialist and

ahistorical conception of the political community (Neocosmos, 2006:16 & 72). Neocosmos (2006:72) further argues that:

> At the same time, class, gender and racial distinctions made possible the actual practice, if not the formal idea, of 'degrees of citizenship', whereby some come to possess greater claims to being part of the nation than others, and others are often close to being foreigners or largely 'rightless' because politically weak and marginalised

This conception of citizenship by the state continues to manage differences in a way that reinforce boundaries, entitling some to more rights and freedoms than others (Ellapen, 2015:3). According to Batisai (2016:119), "the emergence of the nation and the politics of gendered (and racialised) access to citizenship and national belonging" has been, and continues to be, defined by "the colonial project". Post-apartheid coloniality continues to demarcate "hierarchised and marginalising" relationships and spaces for those perceived as "other", resulting in some citizens being framed as "inferior" and having to continuously fight for access (Batisai, 2016:120-121). For many South Africans, full citizenship has not been attained and, as Stephens and Boonzaier (2020:324) purport that any "conceptualisations of full citizenship in contemporary South Africa require a reframing that recognises the coloniality of power and the heterogeneity of marginalised and invisibilized subjectivities".

Moreover, Batisai (2016:121) begs the important question; if the bodies of some South African citizens are marked as different, othered and exploited according to colonial gender hierarchies, "what then is the place of foreigners from other African contexts?". This question introduces xenophobia, which has been central in the process of marking bodies for inclusion or exclusion, part of the South African project from coloniality onward (Batisai, 2016:121). According to Mosselson (2010:641), the multiple outbreaks of xenophobic violence in South Africa are ways in which inclusion and exclusion have been extended into citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa. Colonial differences extend into xenophobia, which finds meaning through the assertion of national belonging and re-articulation of fixed boundaries (Klotz, 2016).

Mamdani's (1996) "Citizen and Subject" explores how institutional segregation based, not just on race but other forms of power, carries through from colonial rule into the post-independence context. He argues that while deracialisation at independence was

carried out with relative success, tribalisation remains embedded in African institutions, containerising the subject population. Thus, according to Mamdani (1996), indirect rules endure through the politicisation of ethnic differences, which has been used as a form of statecraft to demarcate who should be included/excluded in the political community (Ahluwalia, 1999).

Using intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), it becomes apparent how colonial modes of power continue to operate along overlapping categories of race, nationality, gender and sexuality, which become important markers of "otherness", used to differentiate between citizens and outsiders or "throw-away people" (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:194; Batisai, 2016:122; Nyamnjoh, Hall & Cirolia, 2022). Batisai (2016:129) uses the metaphor "throw-away people" to describe the way in which "gendered, sexualised and racialized bodies, and foreign nationals" are subjected to prejudice and violence. These intersecting vulnerabilities inherent in the *coloniality of citizenship* in South Africa are "mirrored in female migrant's unequal access to citizenship rights" (Roth, 2020:63).

According to Yuval-Davis (2006:204), this political process is underlined by "the 'dirty business of boundary maintenance' (which) is all about meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation… whether they are 'us' or 'them'". This process includes struggles around the determination of what it means to belong and this manifests in the construction of, and contestation over, citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 2006:205).

Hobden (2020:172) also argues that since the progressive 1995 South African Immigration legislation, subsequent amendments, convey "a steady rolling back of access to South African citizenship". The 2004 Immigration Amendment Act, for example, granted the DHA unchecked power by dissolving accountability mechanisms, including the internal anti-corruption unit and the migration liaison committee. The 2011 Refugee Amendment Act allowed for the further consolidation of power by DHA, expanding the minister's power of appointment on the Immigration Advisory Board and sanctioning the ability to withdraw or designate a port of entry (Lennep, 2018). These amendments have enabled the obstructive behaviour of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) who act with complete impunity. DHA goes

beyond it's mandate, enforcing stricter regulations than the law according to its own sense of prerogative (Hobden, 2020:170).

Over the years amendments continue to be characterised by "temporality, control and deterrence" (Lennep, 2018), and do not fulfil on constitutional obligations (Hobden, 2020). Most recently, the 2017 White Paper on International Migration demonstrates the state's securitised migration agenda and its consistent project of rolling back rights. Of major concern is the state's plan to set up 'Asylum Processing Centres', moving towards an encampment system that withdraws asylum-seekers' right to work, study and move freely. Moreover, the paper expands the basis upon which refugees can be excluded, rejecting those who failed to apply for status in safe countries en route to South Africa (Scalabrini, 2019).

These institutional shifts towards oppressive politics and the "long-term continuation of clearly problematic situations (in citizenship law) represent a hidden agenda to keep South Africa for South Africans" (Hobden, 2020:169). Such physical state practices have asserted an exclusionary definition of nationality, fuelling xenophobia (Klotz, 2016). These physical and discursive elements of political exclusion have been made especially evident by the government's response to Covid-19, which has further reduced the social and economic support of vulnerable populations and increased their exposure to precarity (Nyamnjoh, Hall & Ciroli, 2022:31).

Unequal and gendered citizenship in the era of Covid-19

According to Ryan and El Ayadi (2020:1406), Covid-19 has worsened the inequality, violence and exclusion to which the most marginalised people in society are subjected, and any analysis of its effects requires an intersectional lens that recognises the overlapping identities that render these people vulnerable. The pandemic and its policy responses have highlighted and reinforced discrimination according to race, gender, class and nationality, whether through excluding vulnerable groups from Covid-19 mitigation measures or implementing policies that have negative effects on their well-being (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021). Garba and Willie (2020) maintain that the South African government's response to the pandemic has prioritised exclusion over solidarity, ignoring the full range and dynamics of vulnerability. The March 2020 lockdown, starting with Level 5 regulations on the 27th of March 2020, had severe socio-economic consequences for working-class South Africans,

deepening existing crises of poverty, unemployment and hunger (De Groot & Lemanski, 2020:259). These lockdown measures restricted people's freedom of movement – requiring people to stay in their homes and socially isolate – as well as their freedom of trade which brought the economy (outside of essential services) to a standstill (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021). The loss of income for many already-vulnerable households made food insecurity dire, and for some dying of starvation became a greater risk than dying of Covid-19 (De Groot & Lemanski, 2020:259 & 266).

These socio-economic insecurities have been especially hard-hitting for marginalised groups, deepening structural inequalities. Government's responses have had a gendered effect, intensifying the vulnerabilities of women in South Africa (Mutambara, Crankhaw & Freedman, 2021). Between February and April 2020, 2.9 million, approximately two-thirds of job losses, were women (Casale & Posel, 2020:1). Casale and Posel (2020) demonstrate how these job losses are expected to have long-term consequences, many not returning to previous employment, or only being able to work reduced hours with a continued loss of income. They show how the pandemic also destabilised work in the unpaid care economy, with women carrying most of the increased burden of care, both physically and financially. This double burden of care, compounded by the gendered gap in the loss of income, has severe implications for women – many of whom live in poorer households than men. In addition to food scarcity, many women have reported an increase in homelessness, as a result of not being able to pay rent, as well as increased cases of gender-based violence, due to the restrictions on the freedom of movement (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021).

Migrant women have been especially hard hit by the government's Covid-19 response, as the vulnerabilities they experience as women intersect with their experiences of precarity, as a result of their migrant status. Many migrant women only have access to precarious employment in the informal sector and, on top of this, "have less choice and more difficult access to informal employment than their male counterparts" (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021). Prior to the pandemic, many migrant women had been living day to day with no ability to save their earnings. The lockdown regulations pushed these women into desperate financial situations (Mutambara,

Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021). According to Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi (2020:3):

> Before the lockdown containment measures, foreign-born migrants living in SA had relatively weakened social support structures, bleak socio-economic prospects, unequal access to health care and social services, precarious housing conditions, tenuous living and working conditions, and higher risks of exploitation and abuse. The lockdown containment measures worsened their conditions.

Despite the severity of these women's socioeconomic insecurities, they were excluded from receiving the benefits of the state's socioeconomic support plan (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021). Government provided relief through a temporary 6-month increase of existing unemployment and child support grants, coupled with a new COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) (De Groot & Lemanski, 2020:259-261). However this assistance was only extended to those with a South African National Identity Document (ID), permanent residence document or refugee status (Ellis, 2020). On the 18th of June 2020, the SRD grant was ordered to be extended to asylum seekers and special permit holders by the Pretoria High Court, ruling the existing directives of the grant unconstitutional (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021:12). Despite this ruling, research investigating access to the SRD grants found that very few with refugee status, asylum seeker papers and special permits were able to access them and, in some cases, were refused on the basis of citizenship (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021:12). These criteria for accessing SRD grants also overlooked the millions of undocumented persons in South Africans, both foreign-and-locally-born, as well as those whose documentation expired during the lockdown period and were unable to renew documents due to the closure of DHA (Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi, 2020:3).

The South African government also provided a Business Relief Fund of ZAR500-million for 100% South African-owned businesses affected by the pandemic, excluding all businesses owned by those legally classified as asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants (Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi, 2020:4). Additionally, Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) payments, offered during the lockdown regulations, were conditional on having a South African ID, rendering asylum-seekers

and special permit holders unable to access funds despite UIF compliance (Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi, 2020:4). Finally, to combat food insecurity the government provided food parcels to food-scarce communities. Like many other relief measures, food parcels were only offered to those with a South African ID or special-permit holders, excluding the vast majority of migrants (Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi, 2020:4). State prejudice was also displayed when the ban on informal food providers was lifted, allowing only South African-owned and operated *spaza* shops to function (Zanker & Moyo, 2020:106). Thus, not only were migrants prohibited from working and earning an income to survive, but they were also excluded from many other benefits given to South African citizens.

Moreover, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency and a failure to regularise the asylum system have resulted in "a backlog in the processing and adjudication of documents" (Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi, 2020:2). This, coupled with institutionalised xenophobia and a 96% rejection rate of asylum claims by DHA (Amnesty International, 2019:5), has resulted in many refugees and asylum seekers being unable to claim their rights, or access required documents (Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi, 2020:2). These challenges were compounded by the closure of the DHA during the pandemic, preventing the renewal of permits (Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi, 2020:3). By failing to take this distressing reality of becoming documented in South Africa into consideration, requiring certain documentation to access Covid-19 related support and relief measures, the government's response heightened the precarity and violence experienced by already-vulnerable migrants. These exclusionary citizenship-based policies as well as the government's absence of a gendered response, left migrant women extremely exposed to violence and vulnerability, distinguishing between those deserving of state protection and those who are not (Garba & Willie, 2020), reaffirming Batisai's (2016:129) metaphor of the "throw away people".

The state's actions convey an instrumentalisation of xenophobia that acts as a "dangerous stimulant" to other displays of violence and exclusion (Skinner & Watson, 2021:306). This has been reflected by the actions of law enforcement officers, whereby migrants and refugees have been targeted for arrest due to Covid-19 regulation breaches (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021). Additionally, the government has used the pandemic to justify 'already aspired to exclusionary policies' to justify a 40km fence on the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe, as well as

its military policing, by constructing migrants as a threat to public health and safety (Zanker & Moyo, 2020:105).

This narrow citizenship approach in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic seeks to further inequality, especially between 'citizen' and 'non-citizen', and along gendered lines (Mukumbang, Ambe & Adebiyi, 2020; Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021). Research assessing the impacts of Covid-19 on women refugees in South Africa, concludes:

> The direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 on individuals according to their social location have reinforced intersecting drivers of marginalization and exclusion. Unless a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach is adopted both to understanding the impacts of the pandemic, and to designing responses to these, marginalization and exclusion will continue to grow (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021)

Thus, an extensive literature review suggests both the pre-existence of vulnerabilities experienced by migrant women prior to Covid-19, as well as how these have been exacerbated by the government's response. It has exposed the reality of structural gender inequalities in South Africa, as well as enduring structural violence and discrimination directed towards migrants. It is clear that the implementation of exclusionary policies by the South African government has reinforced structural inequality and will have severe long-term consequences for migrant women living in South Africa. This research intends to investigate further the effects of the government's response on migrant women's exposure to vulnerability and, using Boatcă and Roth's (2016) term *coloniality of citizenship* as a lens to analyse the response, whether the government policies can be seen as reinforcing an unequal and gendered citizenship regime in South Africa.

The interface of agency and deprivation during Covid-19

Some authors researching the lived realities of migrant women during Covid-19 have drawn crucial attention to practices of human agency that accompany migrant women's experiences of vulnerability and deprivation. For example, Nyamnjoh, Hall, and Cirolia (2022:37) examine the complex interfaces between agency and precarity experienced by Congolese asylum-seeking women living in Cape Town by drawing attention to the various new and innovative working practices adopted by these women

as a way of surviving their extreme uncertainty and heightened vulnerability in a pronounced crisis. The authors also highlighted the role of religion in the lives of these women which offered "both a network of support and a practice of agency", whereby agency was upheld "through social dimensions of prayer" (Nyamnjoh, Hall & Cirolia, 2022:37). These practices offered a "sense of hopefulness" that provided a way of coping with, and making meaning of, their desperate living conditions. (Nyamnjoh, Hall & Cirolia, 2022:45). According to the authors:

> This invites creative ways of seeing and thinking of asylum as neither the cruel regulation of "otherness," nor a temporary injunction accompanied by a prohibition of rights, but as a recognition and incorporation of human agency in a volatile world.

By drawing attention to examples of agency exercised by migrant women, the authors avoid merely constructing their participants as passive victims and offer ways in which power structures are navigated and potentially challenged through their complex reality of agency and deprivation. This is an important consideration, which I intend to include in my research.

Significance of the project

I hope that this research will clarify the needs of migrant women by assessing their experiences of vulnerability and how these have been affected by the South African government's response to Covid-19. This research will hopefully offer guidance in addressing these needs and ensuring that these women's marginalisation and exclusion do not continue to increase. By evaluating these experiences and how they have been influenced by the state's actions, I expect to reveal the gaps in the government's Covid-19 response, which have been unable to address the needs of the most vulnerable and which - most worryingly - appear to have prioritised exclusion, illuminating the recurrent structural inequality reinforced by the South African government. By exposing the xenophobic and gendered nature of the government's response, this research project has the potential to reveal how the state continues to preserve and perpetuate structural violence against vulnerable groups, using covid as an excuse to pursue an exclusionary state agenda.

Research question

My literature review has revealed both the pre-existence of vulnerabilities experienced by migrant women prior to Covid-19, as well as how these have been exacerbated by the effects of the government's response. Additionally, it exposed the reality of structural gender inequalities in South Africa, as well as enduring structural violence and discrimination directed towards migrants, which intersect to create a range of insecurities for migrant women. Research conducted in the last two years, in the wake of Covid-19, has argued that the South African government's response to the pandemic has deepened socio-economic crises, namely poverty, unemployment and hunger, and prioritised exclusion. By implementing exclusionary policies that reinforce structural inequality in the era of a global pandemic (when vulnerabilities are at an all-time high) this research maintains that the government's response will have severe long-term consequences for vulnerable groups.

My research aims to critically assess how the government's Covid-19 response has affected the vulnerabilities experienced by black female migrants living in Cape Town. Through this investigative process, I hope to reveal the extent to which migrant women's experiences of citizenship are rooted in the *coloniality of power* and whether the government's response can be seen as entrenching the *coloniality of citizenship* in South Africa. With this in mind, I phrase my central research question as follows:

> **How has Covid-19 and the South African government's response affected Cape Town-based migrant women's exposure to vulnerability, and what does this reveal about the institution of citizenship in South Africa?**

Four sub-research questions were devised to address this:

1. How has the government's Covid-19 response affected the vulnerabilities experienced by migrant women living in Cape Town, including their exposure to structural and direct forms of violence?
2. What have been the effects of the South African government's covid policies on migrant women's ability to realise full citizenship (both in terms of their access to legal rights, as well as their subjective experiences of belonging and inclusion), and what does this reflect about its citizenship paradigm?

3. Are there instances of agency enacted by migrant women, amongst their experiences of deprivation, that offer a challenge to their citizenship status in South Africa?
4. Are there examples of solidarity existent between migrant women and South African citizens within their community that challenge the dominant discourse of belonging and exclusion in South Africa?

In order to answer these questions, I will be delving into concepts like citizenship, otherness and belonging, examining how these have been historically constructed and have come to find they're meaning in South Africa. Using literature by Arendt (1964) and Butler (2009) (in Arora & Majumder, 2021), Gqola (2021), and Nshimbi (2022), the significance that these constructions hold for certain bodies being situated outside of citizenship will be unpacked, both in the local and global context.

The thesis goes on to describe the methodological approach and practise, before turning to presenting findings and analysis. Finally, the thesis concludes that the government's response, while heightening migrant women's exposure to vulnerability, did not bring about a substantial shift in access to citizenship but rather worsened it by reinforcing barriers to accessing rights and reasserting participants' nonbelonging in South Africa. Thus, the government's response to Covid-19 is indicative of the already-existent racialised and gendered citizenship regime and enduring *coloniality of citizenship.*

CHAPTER 2

Conceptualisation of Key Concepts and Theoretical Framework

This chapter aims to conceptualise the central research question by unpacking its different elements and defining the key concepts that emerged within it. The research question intends to uncover the effects that the government's responses had on migrant women and whether these created new vulnerabilities for migrant women or exacerbated existing ones. I shall investigate female migrants' experiences of vulnerability, both in their relation to the state (i.e. structural violence), as well as their experiences of vulnerability in the home and within the community (direct violence). Thus, my first sub-research question reads as follows: *How has the government's Covid-19 response affected the vulnerabilities experienced by migrant women living in Cape Town, including their exposure to structural and direct forms of violence?*

It is also essential to assess the link between migrant women's experiences of vulnerability and their access to citizenship (conceptualised below). Thus, sub-research Question 2 reads: *What have been the effects of the South African government's covid policies on migrant women's ability to realise full citizenship (both in terms of their access to legal rights, as well as their subjective experiences of belonging and inclusion), and what does this reflect about its citizenship paradigm?*

This question also aims to examine migrant women's access to citizenship rights and entitlements within the theoretical frame of the *coloniality of citizenship*. I am also interested in any alternative discourses migrant women might provide, which contradict or challenge the exclusionary citizenship discourse in South Africa, as they try to navigate their day-to-day experiences and challenges. This is investigated by sub-research Question 3:*Are there instances of agency enacted by migrant women, amongst their experiences of deprivation, that offer a challenge to their citizenship status in South Africa?;* and sub-research Question 4: *Are there examples of solidarity existent between migrant women and South African citizens within their community that challenge the dominant discourse of belonging and exclusion in South Africa?*

Before I began my research process I needed to specify and define certain concepts in my central research question. One such concept is citizenship. I use Yuval-Davis's (in Stephens & Boonzaier, 2020:326) definition of citizenship, an "embodied, affective and psychic lived subjectivity and experience, embedded within the dynamic

intersections of multiple identities, feelings of belonging, and historical, structural and discursive pattern of power-knowledge relations". This definition of citizenship conceptualises the term as a subjective experience rather than just a legal status. In this regard, I will refer to the terms full citizenship and partial citizenship to describe participant's subjective experiences, either as one premised on inclusion, where constitutional rights are accessible and a sense of belonging is promoted (full citizenship), or one determined by exclusion, precarity and violence (partial citizenship).

The inclusion of belonging is important here, as according to Parekh (2008:28) without belonging to a community "a person loses the right to have rights", pushing them into a state "rightless" state of being. Parekh (2008) draws on Arendt's (1951) conceptualisation of "rightlessness". Arendt (1951:297) writes:

> Not the loss of significant rights, then, but the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever, has been the calamity which has befallen ever-increasing numbers of people. Man, it turns out, can lose all so-called Rights of Man without losing his essential quality as man, his human dignity. Only the loss of a polity itself expels him from humanity.

Parekh (2008:29) explains how, for Arendt, this state of rightlessness (the loss of a right to have rights) deprives one "from a *place in the world that makes opinions significant and actions effective"* (italicis in original). It is a state of deprivation of opinion and action, or a deprivation of what makes us human, a stripping of human dignity (Parekh, 2008:30). Thus, while "civic" rights, such as the right to freedom of movement, freedom of expression and equality might be present, these are inaccessible without a sense of community, which can bestow upon one the right to have rights.

Another term that needs to be defined is "migrant", as it has been increasingly used in different ways according to different political interests (Carling, 2017). The term has often been used by those with a political interest in denying protection to migrants, to distinguish between those who have a choice to change their place of residence and those who are forced to (commonly defined as refugees). This *residualist* approach separating migrants and refugees ignores how "anyone on the move may have a well-founded fear of persecution and be entitled to international protection (Carling, 2017). Instead, I use an inclusive definition of migrants, as persons who move away from

their usual place of residence for a variety of reasons. Additionally, I use the concept migrant to refer to all African foreigners, regardless of their legal or documentation status, moving from elsewhere in the continent and relocating to South Africa. This is because migration discourse in South Africa has a distinct racial basis, centring on black Africans, but precluding discussions on colonialism, or the presence of white/European foreigners. Additionally, according to Valji (2003) (in Zanker and Moyo, 2020:102), "the political and administrative response and societal understanding have long merged refugees and migrants in the system". Moreover, extreme inefficiency and xenophobia on the part of DHA have made becoming documented nearly impossible for foreign-born Africans, making legal migration classifications used by the South African government unhelp and exclusionary for the vast majority. This, as well as the homogenous portrayal of Africans flooding the borders and putting constraints on resources, both by the media and by the state, has resulted in the public's "inability to distinguish, or understand, the various migration categories" and has "led to an expressed hatred of all black foreigners as 'illegals'" (Valji, 2003). By using the term migrant I intend to emphasise the humanity of all foreign-born Africans living in South Africa, including those who do not fit legal definitions, reasserting their deservingness of care and compassion (Hamlin, 2022).

Finally, vulnerability, which refers to the state of being psychologically or physically harmed and resulting from a range of different factors, needed to be specified for the purpose of my research. In this case, vulnerability largely refers to structural inequalities and experiences of exclusion resulting from discrimination according to intersecting identities that affect one's physical and emotional well-being.

Boatcă and Roth's (2016) term *coloniality of citizenship* will be used as a lens to analyse the effects of the government's Covid-19 response on women migrants living in Cape Town and assess what this conveys about the existent citizenship paradigm. Through this lens, I hope to uncover how the South African government's response to Covid-19 affected the pre-existing structural inequality and violence experienced by the most vulnerable. By examining the gendered effects of the Covid-19 related regulations, as well as the marginalisation of those constructed as non-citizens, this research intends to understand whether the government policies can be seen as (re)inforcing an unequal and gendered citizenship regime in South Africa. An important part of this analysis is the question of temporality i.e. does the government's

Covid-19 response convey a shift in its immigration and/or citizenship policies?; was there a change in the government's migration and citizenship discourse?; or does the government's response to Covid-19 merely reflect the existing citizenship regime and its ideologies? This will all be examined in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design that was guided by the data needs. I chose qualitative research methods to undertake my project, as I am interested in capturing women migrants' subjective experiences and how these were shaped by the government's response to Covid-19.

Method of Gathering Data

Qualitative research methods were used from a constructivist perspective. Constructivism relates to the idea of making meaning of the world and this approach enables one to examine how different realities arise through the "'construction' of meaning and understanding, based on the individual's context, previous experience and knowledge, attitudes and beliefs" (Mann & MacLeod, 2015:52). By using a constructivist approach I aimed to understand the meaning that participants created in relation to their social conditions and structures surrounding them. Qualitative methods enables me to capture these subjective perceptions and experiences, departing from an emic perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 271).

I began by contacting numerous non-government organisations (NGOs) focused on issues around migration and citizenship, and working with and for migrant women. I received responses from Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) and the Scalabrini Institute, who both agreed to assist me in my research process. Sharon Ekambaram, from LHR, agreed to answer some interview questions over email, which was followed up by an online informal interview. This interview was extremely insightful in providing an understanding of the history and context of migration citizenship policy in South Africa, tracing the legacy of apartheid and post-apartheid neoliberalisation. Sharon gave detailed examples of institutional xenophobia that she has witnessed through her work and stressed the numerous reactionary shifts in migrant policy and discourse that have been taking place in the last decade. She highlighted the many challenges that women migrants experienced during the lockdown due to the exclusionary government policy and the absence of a gendered response. This interview gave me a perceptive overview of South African migration policy and citizenship law, building on my understanding gained through the literature review.

I then conducted 14 in-person qualitative, semi-structured interviews, nine of which were recruited via snowball sampling methods. Initial contact with women was secured by a research informant, introduced to me by my supervisor, who informed the women of my research and the interview requirements and then assisted me in setting up times to interview the women at their convenience. These interviews were conducted in Langa, either in my car or in a Mosque, when available. I then recruited another five participants through the Scalabrini Institute via random sampling methods, choosing names to contact from a list of contacts provided by the organisation. These women were contacted first via WhatsApp messenger and informed about the nature of the research and the requirements of the interview and, if they agreed to participate, were further contacted to set up an interview at a time and a place suitable for them. These fourteen in-person interviews were conducted using in-depth qualitative, semi-structured interview techniques, roughly following an interview questionnaire consisting of mainly open-ended questions guided by the research sub-questions. These interview techniques allowed me to gather detailed and descriptive data that could provide a holistic picture of participants experiences and perceptions, helping me to understand their daily lived realities (Bryman, 1988:64). Interviews lasted approximately forty minutes.

Initially I only intended to conduct 8-10 interviews. This amount was chosen, both because I predicted I would struggle to find willing participants given the sensitivity of the topic, and because I hoped the interviews would be in-depth interviews of approximately an hour. I soon realised that, in some cases, the language barrier between myself and the participants resulted in less in-depth responses than I initially hoped for. This, as well as time constraints, given the women's busy daily schedules, resulted in shorter interviews of approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Thus, given that more interview participants were available to me, I decided to conduct more interviews to gain greater insight into the experiences of women migrants.

I began each interview with background questions to gain an understanding of the participant's history and socio-economic context and then moved between questions on; access to public services, experiences with police, healthcare practitioners and DHA officials, access to legal aid and justice, gendered challenges, community friendship, feelings of exclusion, mental health issues; to name a few, always coming back to how these experiences were affected by the government's response to Covid-

19. Concluding questions focused on participants' perception of the government's policy, how the government's actions, or inaction, make them feel, and what they feel needs to change to address their vulnerabilities and make South Africa a more equal and inclusive country. Informed consent was received by all participants, all of whom signed a consent form (See appendix A) and interviews were recorded for later transcription.

I examined the experiences of both documented and undocumented women. This decision was taken to ensure that I do not close my research off to potential findings of insecurities resulting from the Covid-19 related regulations regarding documentation and legal status. These women were all of different ages, between 22 and 47, and came from numerous different African countries, including Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Congo. By investigating the experiences of migrant women living in Cape Town, I draw broad conclusions about the effects that the South African government's response to Covid-19 has had on migrant women living in South Africa more generally. This will be addressed in the discussion chapter, where these experiences are analysed through the lens of colonial citizenship, arguing what this reveals about its existing citizenship paradigm.

Reactivity and reflexivity were important considerations in addressing my unique positionality and how it could impact all stages of the research process. These approaches helped to mitigate research bias through consistent self-awareness and self-assessment of my own position and how it could indirectly influence my research design, execution and interpretation of findings. In formulating my questionnaire I took care to consider how certain questions could affect the participant's attitude and their willingness to participate in the interview, as well as influence participants' responses. I tried to avoid any leading and loaded questions that could invoke responses in order to confirm my research assumptions based on previous academic experiences. I also tried to assure reflexivity at every step of the research process, remaining conscious of my own beliefs and prejudices and how they may influence the research process (Jubber, 1999:9). I wrote a brief note after each interview to document my initial thoughts and feelings, on which I reflected during the transcription process and early stages of coding. This process helped to ensure that these feelings and experiences did not unduly influence the way I interpreted the data and formulated conclusions.

These steps were also used to address some of the ethical concerns within my research process. An important concern was addressing the power asymmetries existence between myself, as the researcher, and the migrant women, as the "so-called beneficiaries of humanitarian research and action", who "are often excluded from participation in decision-making about the research intended to benefit their communities" (Singh et al., 2021:561). I aimed to conduct my research in a gender-responsive and ethical manner" (Mutambara, Crankshaw & Freedman, 2021), utilising a feminist research approach, which seeks to address gender and colonial hierarchies existing in the research process (Singh et al., 2021:561). This was undertaken by constantly reflecting on my position of privilege – both as the researcher and as a white woman from a high-income-earning household – and how this may affect reactivity and reflexivity in my research process. A feminist approach was also advanced by trying to draw out a holistic picture of women's realities in the interview process, ensuring that their complex and sometimes contradictory experiences were accurately displayed in the research findings, such as instances of agency as well as experiences of dependency and precarity. An intersectional approach was used by assuring I was acutely aware of the numerous vulnerabilities experienced by participants trying to remain cognizant of how these affect every aspect of their lives, including their participation in my research. However, this approach also demands that I recognise the strengths and agency of participants as experts in the knowledge I am trying to understand and attain from an outside perspective. My role as learner and theirs, as teacher, complicates and destabilises the relationship of power in the research space. I have taken all these realities into account while navigating the research process. I have also tried to prioritise participants' needs throughout the process, embedding "ethics of care approaches that value people more than they value data" (Singh et al., 2021:561).

Moreover, for transformative research to take place, I, the researcher, had to submit my mind to be decolonised as my positionality and vantage point shape how phenomena in the research "can be known, understood and constructed" (Lipscombe et al., 2021:5). My position of privilege and associated experiences are inseparable from my ways of knowing that inform tacit research and knowledge assumptions, which are at risk of subjugating other realities and ways of knowing. As wa Thiong'o (1986:9) writes:

> Berlin of 1884 was effected through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom.

wa Thiong'o highlights how the "most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised" (wa Thiong'o, 1986:16), whereby their entire way of looking at the world was ingrained as Eurocentric. "The earth moved around the European intellectual scholarly axis" and thus for wa Thiong'o "the quest for relevance and for a correct perspective can only be understood and be meaningfully resolved within the context of the general struggle against imperialism" (2004:1139 & 1142). To ensure I did not reproduce singular perspectives informed by my positionality or the "dominant conventions" informed by Eurocentric intellectual traditions that have historically been privileged in "scientific discourse" (Lipscombe et al., 2021:5-6), an incremental research approach was taken. This approach attempted to (as far as possible) position the voices and perspectives of participants in a way that exposes their lived realities, though presented through my research.

The Analytical Procedure

I followed the analytical procedures of Miles and Haberman described in De Wet and Erasmus (2005). Each interview was recorded and then transcribed using verbatim transcription (See appendix B). I began the first phase of analysis by closely reading and re-reading the research transcripts in order to engage with the data in a less controlled and holistic manner (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005:30). Once I had gained an understanding of the data as a whole, and the predominant themes occurring, I grouped the data into thematic clusters by highlighting the text relating to the different themes on each separate transcript according to a colour-coded system. This began the process of 'first-level coding'. I grouped the data into seventeen broad thematic codes: Further impoverishment due to lockdown; Damage to mental health; Increased gendered abuse and exclusion; Distrust of officials, Experiences of fear due to criminality; Exclusionary state discourse and practice; Health xenophobia; Issues around documentation; Exclusion by DHA; Community exclusion; Language barrier; Desire to go home; Small solidarities; Survival tactics; Role of religion; Lack of support and increased hopelessness; Expectation vs reality.

These steps, as well as summaries of the findings under each code were recorded in an electronic journal (See appendix C) to keep track of my progress. Here, important quotations from the data were provided to support these findings, as well as to weight the evidence according to the repetition of themes and their prevalence among respondents (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005:34).

These first-level codes formed the broad structure of analysis. They were then re-evaluated by examining overlapping themes and patterns among them. The first thing I took cognisance of was which codes could be attributed to the government's response to Covid-19, and which were pre-existent, but could also be analysed later on in the process to identify potential indirect effects. The only three codes that could be identified as direct effects of the covid response were: Further impoverishment due to lockdown; Lockdown's effects on mental health; Increased gendered abuse and exclusion. These were thus separated from the other codes and labelled as 'Direct effects of the Covid-19 response', while the remaining codes were labelled as 'Pre-existent'. In order to then move to the process of second-level coding I identified complex connections between the codes that could explain the linkages between themes that emerged in the data. For example the codes, Further impoverishment due to lockdown; Damage to mental health; Gendered effects of the Covid-19 response, all created additional vulnerabilities for migrant women and were thus re-coded as 'Heightened vulnerability by lockdown', while the codes 'Fear of criminality' and 'Distrust of officials', all restrict women's freedom of movement, often making them feel trapped and isolated, and were thus re-coded as 'Unfreedom and Entrapment'. By identifying complex linkages among the codes, I identified six second-level codes: Heightened vulnerability by lockdown; Unfreedom and entrapment; Experience of violence (structural and direct); Longing and lack of belonging; Hope vs. hopelessness; Agency and alternatives. Each step of the coding process was recorded in an electronic journal, which was repeatedly checked and verified to ensure rigorous analysis. The electronic journal outlines all coding decisions and provides in-depth evidence from the data.

As an exploratory, reflexive exercise I examined and pulled out as many themes as possible, not limiting these to just answering the research questions, but exploring all experiences to get a full picture of participants' reality. The above analytical procedure allowed for this process, while still being structured and methodical, retaining the

connectivity of practising intersectionality and guaranteeing awareness of my perceptions and privileges and decolonising my mind.

Research Limitations

I was able to address some of my initial research concerns, such as limitations anticipated in access to certain types of respondents, most notably undocumented migrant women, because of their extreme vulnerability, and the potential reluctance of women to share their experiences of vulnerability with someone unfamiliar. With the aid of the Scalabrini Institute and a research informant, I was able to find willing participants relatively easily, and I found women eager to share their experiences and have their stories heard. Interestingly, I found the majority of participants were undocumented at the stage of the interview, with only one woman holding a temporary asylum-seeker permit. The data is thus skewed towards the experiences of undocumented migrant women, which may affect conclusions drawn from the findings. This could have been addressed by a more systematic sampling method, where greater access to participants is available. I was also concerned about my ability to build trust with the women and reduce power imbalances in the research process that might cause participants to moderate their responses. I felt that I was able to build a level of rapport with the women and that they were extremely honest and forthcoming about their feelings and experiences.

Language was one barrier that remained a concern. Some women's proficiency in English was different from others. A few interviews were very descriptive and the women in these interviews conveyed a profound understanding of government policy and discourse. The majority of the participants had a good level of English proficiency, but there were two or three interviews where the data quality was limited, as the participants could not understand certain questions and there is also the possibility that responses were misinterpreted. I chose to include these interviews, as I did not want to exclude these women's experiences, especially seeing as they face additional vulnerabilities due to their limited ability to communicate with "locals" and navigate their surroundings. I believe these interviews still offer valuable data, despite their reduced quality. Finally, although I have had previous research experience, I found that my first one or two interviews were less thorough than the later ones, as my inexperience made me nervous, occasionally causing me to rush through the interview. When I went back and listened to these earlier interviews I occasionally identified

gaps in the data due to my failure to follow up on responses and investigate them further. Fortunately, these were minor details and I was able to reach out to the research informant for greater insight when necessary. From these experiences I learnt how to improve upon my interview process, aiding future interviews.

Ethical Appraisal

As the researcher, it was my responsibility to provide the participants with all the necessary information about my research project and what their participation would require. This was discussed before interviews began and also outlined in a consent form (see Appendix A) which I went over with participants to ensure they knew the details of what they were signing. Once informed consent was given, I gave participants time to ask me questions to ensure the specificities of my research project were clear before confirming that they were willing to proceed with the interview. I tried to make participants feel as comfortable as possible during the interview process and assured them of their right to terminate the interview at any time and to abstain from answering any questions they do not wish to answer. The identity of each participant has been anonymised and their privacy protected at every step of the research process.

Conducting research on vulnerable groups required special attention to "the performance of power within the research process" (Stephens & Boonzaier, 2020:339), with the aim of representing the true realities of the participants gathered through the interview process. I believe this was achieved through the steps outlined in my methodology. Asking questions about experiences of vulnerability also had the potential to cause psychological stress for participants and I tried to broach such questions with immense care and sensitivity. By prioritising the needs of migrant women and ensuring that their safety was never secondary to their so-called "data-value", as well as applying an intersectional and Feminist approach, as outlined in my methodology, I believe my findings expose the lived experiences of the participants, giving them a platform for their truth to be heard and shared.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

My research findings are a response to the sub-questions posed at the beginning of my research project. The common themes identified expose a multitude of heightened vulnerabilities experienced by migrant women as a result of the government's response to Covid-19, as well as highlight pre-existent experiences of structural violence, which the government's response has reasserted. Emergent themes also speak to participants' feelings of inclusion/exclusion and experiences of belonging/non-belong and how these affected their ability to form a community and garner support and solidarity when in need. The findings illuminate instances of agency through survival tactics and examples of profound strength in spite of consistent adversity, as well as offer counter-narratives to that of exclusion and otherness, paving the way for an alternative citizenship discourse. In the following chapters, I will highlight the broad themes that emerged in the data linked to evidence-based research. I followed an inductive process, whereby these findings emerged empirically through my research process. This will be illustrated through evidence from the interviews.

Exposure to vulnerability: Change or continuity?

The findings revealed the complicated relationship between change and continuity in participants' perceptions of their exposure to vulnerability. Common themes identified in the findings revealed both, how the government's Covid-19 response increased participants' exposure to vulnerability, and how experiences of vulnerability pre-dated the pandemic. These experiences were impelled through institutionalised xenophobia – supporting what was read in the literature (Chiumbu & Moyo, 2018; Hiropoulos, 2019; Gastrow, 2022) – as well as exposure to structural and direct violence.

Change?

'Heightened vulnerability by lockdown' emerged as an important code in naming the connection between key themes that can be linked to the government's Covid-19 response and participants' perceived experiential change. When asked about their experiences during the lockdown, participants expressed their numerous challenges, as a result of the government's Covid-19 response, which they perceived as causing

their further impoverishment. All of the women experienced a significant and, in many cases, total loss of household income during the lockdown period and were all excluded from government support, such as Covid-19 related relief grants and/or childcare grants, with little to no savings on which to fall back. This severely impacted their ability to buy food and pay rent:

> *Yoh it was not easy, no business, we're just at home. Maybe some months we don't even have money to pay rent.* (Participant D, 2022)

> *Yoh it was difficult because no food, no work, only stay in the house, so we didn't find anything to eat because we're not working.* (Participant E, 2022)

> *... because there's no work, even the people that were working got such a little money. So there was no food, maybe if you're eating in the morning then the next time you eat is at night, because you have to save food for the next day.* (Participant F, 2022)

All participants described how these experiences of precarity were exacerbated by their existing financial insecurity whereby they live day-to-day through numerous survival strategies without savings to rely on in times of crisis:

> *When the government decided to lock down the whole country, this decision ... affected our lives. We couldn't do whatever was in our minds. Everything was very down and foreigners don't have banks or savings. We are doing business for us to live daily. So when they shut everything down, how can you live without savings?* (Participant L, 2023)

This was reasserted by Participant M who, despite having worked for a company in South Africa for ten years, had nothing to fall back on when she was retrenched during the pandemic:

> *Covid wasn't something that we weren't expecting. It just came suddenly and then I realised that I've been working for ten years, but I don't have something that is backing me up… So I wasn't expecting that and that's why I had such a terrible experience, because when Covid came I was just cut-off from everything and even the government didn't have any law that would support you… So it was really difficult. I spent days without eating.*

Twelve participants also highlighted how the challenge to provide needs for themselves was compounded by the challenge to provide for children and other family members, either in South Africa or back home:

> *And you actually don't even have the money to go buy food… We are not working, we don't have any money, and the kids need to be taken care of, but there is no way we can work to feed the kids. We survived just by the grace of God.* (Participant K)

Moreover, all participants communicated that they are still feeling the long-term consequences of the Lockdown measures either due to the permanent loss of jobs, struggles to overcome increased financial precarity, and/or stagnant economic growth. This was articulated by Participant K (2023) who lost her peanut butter business:

> *We have been wounded. We have lost so much... I started a business selling lightly salted Zim peanut butter, without sugar. And Zambians like that peanut butter, Zimbabweans, Congolese. So I sold peanut butter and I even managed to buy a car out of that... But now I lost contact with a lot of those customers… So I lost my business along the way. So it hasn't got back to where it was. We are still healing.*

And Participant C (2022):

> *Covid hurt the business and since then everything has been slow and nothing looks the same like before.*

These findings illustrate how the lockdown drove participants further into poverty by cutting off their income which they relied on to survive day-to-day, as well as excluding them from any Covid-19 related relief grants. This limited migrant women's ability to meet their needs, namely food and shelter, and has had lasting consequences on their financial security due to the permanent loss of jobs and the longer-term damage done to the economy.

Almost all participants (12/14) also highlighted how the lockdown measures negatively impacted their mental health. These participants spoke of increased feelings of hopelessness due to their loss of income and greater impoverishment, as well as resulting from their social isolation. Participant K (2023) expressed her feeling of being trapped by the lockdown measures and the consequences this had on her mental health:

> *Mentally we were so much disturbed. Sometimes we would feel like 'are we still in our right senses? How can we be locked in a country?' Sometimes I felt like I was being squashed. I could not go anywhere… So for me, at one point I felt so much squashed. So I felt my mental senses have been squeezed and squashed.*

And both Participant J and D said that during the Lockdown they felt that there was "no hope":

> *Yeah, covid was making us think there was no hope.* (Participant J, 2023)

> *Yeah it affected us because we went down. There is no hope again and that time we lose hope because we don't know when this covid thing will be over. So there is no hope.* (Participant D, 2022)

Participant D (2022) continued:

> *Yeah we were sacred. Yoh, we don't know what will happen. Maybe could be weeks and we have no food.*

This statement highlights the uncertainty and fear experienced by participants about the longevity of the lockdown regulations, and their ability to provide for themselves and meet their needs. This period was also described as demoralising by some participants, who, up until the lockdown regulations, had managed to support themselves, but who became utterly trapped and desperate under the lockdown measures. For Participant M (2023), this experience was humiliating and degrading:

> *So it was really difficult. I spent days without eating and after three days… you know you have some pride and you don't want to go around to ask people, but after three days you didn't eat, look you ask around. This was something I have never done. It's humiliating. It wasn't a good experience.*

Moreover, three participants emphasised how their experiences during the lockdown have had lasting effects on their mental health, with which they are still struggling, articulated by Participant L (2023):

> *I was going crazy. My head was overflowing and sometimes even to walk was difficult; my legs and my arms… sometimes I would wake up and they didn't work, because I was stressing… my mind was so affected by those things. I'd say I'm fine, I'm in a good health, but mentally there is something not right. I*

> *am forgetting things now and I was never like that before… It's difficult for me to leave them behind, because even now I'm not stable.*

These findings illustrate how the government's Covid-19 response made women feel trapped and isolated, invoking fear and desperation due to the uncertainty around the longevity of the lockdown measures and their increased precarity as a result. This severely impacted participants' mental health and has had enduring consequences for some participants' mental well-being.

Additionally, the literature conveyed how migrant women are already susceptible to exclusion and abuse due to their intersecting vulnerabilities (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Batisai, 2016; Boonzaier, 2020; Nyamnjoh, Hall & Cirolia, 2022), which emerge from migrant women's subjective experiences of overlapping structures of oppression relating to their raced, classed and gendered identities (Crenshaw, 1989). The commonplace of exposure to these vulnerabilities was clearly demonstrated by Participant L's (2023) experience:

> *I was living in my sister's house, and because she couldn't afford a big house, so she had to fill it with other people so they could pay and help her to pay for the house. And during Covid, it was difficult because no one was working. So the men that she had in the home, those men wanted to rape me. And what was very bad is that she protected those men, rather than me, her sister… I didn't have someone to stand up for me. So everything they were doing, I was like what can I do? And without papers, you cannot even go and accuse them. And if I was not a woman, I could live in this house and they couldn't come to try and rape me. They know that I'm vulnerable so they can do anything they want. And I'm also a foreigner so I didn't know the language and they just took advantage of me.*

Here, Participant L highlights the vulnerability she experiences both as a woman, and as an undocumented migrant, and how these vulnerabilities can be easily exploited at will. This experience demonstrates how, by failing to take the gendered implications of its lockdown measures into account, the government made an already-vulnerable group more susceptible to exploitation and abuse.

Participant K (2023) also noted how social isolation measures alienated migrant women, cutting them off from crucial networks that could offer guidance and safety in an unfamiliar and often hostile environment:

> *Like the networks were disturbed because of Covid-19. Women migrants all depend on other women to ask like which clinic they can go to, which hospital they can go to, to get maybe family planning pills, sanitary pads, you know those things. But now because of lockdown, we are all in our houses and so many migrant women are now getting unwanted, unplanned babies, because they didn't know where to go to get those pills. Some of them were just new when lockdown started and they don't have anyone to talk to or to ask.*

This participant further elaborated how, by isolating vulnerable groups, the lockdown measures created the possibility for perpetrators to take advantage of migrant women's heightened vulnerability:

> *Then also I discovered, because of the curve, it paved the way for some abuses for some women. Now a man knows there is a woman alone, or a kid alone, and there's no one outside because everyone has to be in the house. That's how kids were raped. The kid is alone at home. There is a girl alone, born from a migrant mother. Those perpetrators took advantage of the curfew, because there is no one seeing them. They rape the kids. They raped the mothers. So it affected a lot of women.* (Participant K, 2023)

Additionally, eight participants expressed that the lockdown measures created an additional burden of care, as more time was needed for childcare due to the closure of schools and creches. This challenge was sharpened due to participants' exclusion from child support grants, which may have alleviated some of their stress in supporting their families. For Participant C, her hair salon was a space where she could take some time to look after herself and get a break from the chaos of her responsibilities at home. When asked if she ever had time to herself to relax and reflect on how she is feeling, Participant C (2022) responded:

> *Usually I used to get some rest when I'm not doing anything at the shop – I'm just sitting there relaxing. And when I get tired and I need to get off also I just take my day off to rest in the shop. But at home, that when I'm at home I*

> *have to do a lot for the kids and my husband and I don't have the rest. Only when I come to the shop, then I can sit when there's no customer and just rest.*

The additional burden of care, highlighted by participant's, was sometimes compounded by women's responsibility to protect and provide for their families by taking up new livelihood strategies. This was highlighted by Participant L (2023):

> *Women could not live normally anymore, because men were sitting at home and women were going out doing everything… all the business is shut down so the women were going out to see how am I going to survive and help my family. So it was like women's responsibility to go out and help the family, by selling stuff in the market and doing things so that that money could help.*

Contrary to experiences of participants having to take greater agency during the lockdown to support themselves and their families, a few participants (3/14) expressed an increase in partner dependency during the lockdown, relying heavily on their husbands:

> *It is always my husband that we rely on so always I pray that God will open a way for him so it will be easy for us. For him, he is the one who supports us, god pass through him so he can support the family.* (Participant C, 2022)

Such experiences of partner dependency were also discussed by two participants without any reference to Covid-19, who described how this pre-existent dependency limited their agency and sense of freedom:

> *Some of them (migrant women), they don't have jobs, most of them are just staying in the house and just waiting for their husband who does everything. So at least it can be better for me. Sometimes I get something and then I take it home, but what about them? They don't have anything.* (Participant A, 2022)

> *I'm a second wife. Yeah my husband, he has another wife at home, and yew it's too much difficult for me to help people back home. When he gets money he sends it to his wife and me, he doesn't give me any.* (Participant B, 2022)

These subjective experiences described by participants covey how they perceive the government's absence of a gendered response exacerbates migrant women's exposure to abuse and exclusion, imposing additional challenges to existing ones.

The findings above display how participants perceive the government's response to Covid-19 as exposing them to increased and intersecting vulnerabilities. The government's lockdown regulations, imposed on its citizenry in response to the pandemic, pushed participants deeper into poverty due to their loss of income and exclusion from government aid, depleting their savings (if any) and consequently led to their inability to meet their needs and, in some cases, the needs of their children. According to participants, the government's absence of a gendered response also exposed women to greater instances of exploitation and abuse, isolating women from important social networks that could offer support and protection, while giving sexual predators greater opportunity. Additionally, some participants faced greater responsibilities and an increased burden of care, while other participants experienced a loss of agency, depending solely on partners and feeling trapped within their homes. These challenges damaged not only the participants' physical well-being but also their mental health. Participants highlighted their increased hopelessness, as they were pushed further to the margins, as well as the fear and uncertainty around how much longer they could continue to survive in such a precarious situation. The damage done to participants' physical and emotional well-being was portrayed as enduring, conveying the lasting implications that the government's response had on them.

The participants interviewed are part of a spectrum of women and other vulnerable groups whose vulnerabilities have been intensified as a result of the government's Covid-19 response. However, what sets the participants' experiences apart from the spectrum of women affected by the response, are the additional and intersecting vulnerabilities faced as a result of their migrant status, such as discrimination in accessing Covid-19 related relief that could have offered participants some small reprieve from their crippling impoverishment.

Continuity?

Exposure to vulnerability, prior to the lockdown measures, was also highlighted by participants, which they saw as emanating from feelings and experiences of 'Unfreedom and entrapment' due to their distrust of police and other officials, as well

as their fear of violent crime. The majority of participants (9/14) stated that they did not trust the South African police. Some participants had experienced discrimination by police officers, where they felt the police were unresponsive due to their "foreign" identity:

> *So sometimes the South African police, when they hear your voice that you are a foreigner, they don't come quick. They don't come quickly like coming to save or do anything. Maybe they hear the voice that you are South African then they can run, but as long they hear the voice … because our English and South African English is not the same.* (Participant A, 2022)

Here, Participant describes how the police are more responsive to South Africans than to migrants, reiterated by Participant F (2022) when asked if she trusts the police:

> *I don't trust them. They always take sides… They always help the South Africans.*

Participants H, I, and K expressed similar sentiments, as well as highlighted the apathy with which police treated their experiences of injustice:

> *I never take support for all this crime, because I'm a foreigner. Even if I experience crime, I go to the police and I don't get any support.* (Participant H, 2022)

> *No, if you tell the police, even the police won't help you. They just say you must take care when you are walking.* (Participant I, 2022)

> *I was so hurt. They didn't come. They just said leave your address and the police will come to your house… When I told them, they said I don't have an issue … they didn't even listen. Then, because they didn't come, in the end the lady came and told me I need to move out of the house… From the way they handled that case… I don't give them enough trust now, because when you go through such a situation and they don't do anything, didn't even follow up. So I wouldn't give them my trust.* (Participant K, 2023)

This perceived apathy and lack of trust in the police to provide help has resulted in participants seldom seeking police help or reporting a crime, made clear in the case of Participants H and I. Participants also revealed their fear of deportation by the police and other officials because of their lack of documentation:

> *Yoh, sometimes with the police I have been scared… so we're not here in our country so we can't be free, and I don't know this country and what-what. So we are scared they send us home.* (Participant D, 2022)
>
> *Sometimes because I don't have the papers I am scared because I think they (officials) are Home Affairs and they've come to check the papers… But then sometimes you are scared; are they police that are just patrolling or are they to come and check the papers. Like when we hear the Home Affairs people are around we have to run and hide somewhere.* (Participant C, 2022)
>
> *They say that if I go there [The DHA] they will catch me and send me home because I'm a foreigner. So I can't get that paper… we're always scared.* (Participant F, 2022)

These perceptions of police and other officials have largely prevented participants from reporting crimes and seeking justice. This was seen in the cases of five participants who had experienced violent crime but who did not even attempt to report these due to their established distrust. These experiences restricted participants' access to justice and their feeling of protection.

Many participants also expressed how they were shocked and frightened when they arrived in South Africa by the commonality of violent crime:

> *When I came here what I am experiencing is all the people are in their homes and people they're killing each other, they are abusing each other.* (Participant A, 2022)
>
> *There are too many gangsters, Amaskollie*[4]*. Yeah it's too much here. The abuse is a lot.* (Participant G, 2022)
>
> *The difficulty that I have is when I came new, the following day I saw someone with the knife coming to me, so that made me scared… this is how it happens in this country. And I say no I can't stay here because it's scary, I don't know what will happen to me… So it made me nervous. Even when I'm working, I'm always watching for something. I hear someone or something*

[4] 'Amaskollie' or 'skollie' is a South African slang word for gangster

> *and my heart starts beating, I start shaking, so it is always disturbing me.* (Participant C, 2022)

For eight participants, these experiences of crime have incited persistent fear making them feel they have to be constantly alert in case danger is waiting around the corner. Some of these participants were even scared to leave their homes further restricting their ability to move freely:

> *I'm scared. Even when we're sleeping we're scared. There is too much scaring me in South Africa.* (Participant H, 2022)

> *Yoh … There are a lot of people who are stealing around here. Even when you are walking you are sacred, you can't even leave your home, or if you want to do something… like we don't trust ourselves. I'm not sure if I am going to reach home or if something will happen to me.* (Participant D, 2022)

This fear of criminality is compounded by participants' feelings of being excluded from access to justice and police protection due to their distrust of officials, as not only are participants scared of abuse by criminals, they feel they lack channels of defending against these abuses. These experiences contributed to participants' feelings of being trapped, lacking mobility and recourse to protection in multiple ways. For some participants, feelings of being trapped were also heightened by partner dependencies, often due to their inability to find work once arriving in South Africa, thus having to rely on their husbands for financial support. These instances of dependency were seen as becoming deeper during lockdown due to the social isolation policy, which further limited these participants' agency and sense of freedom by resigning them to their houses.

'Experiences of violence' and exclusion were perceived by participants as part and parcel of their everyday lives. Participants discussed multiple experiences of structural violence propelled through what participants perceived as unfair exclusionary state discourse and practice. Almost all participants (11/14) lamented that the government's requirements for documentation were too harsh and that their policies discriminate against certain groups of people:

> *I feel the requirements are just too harsh for foreigners. The requirements to get the papers are too harsh, especially for us Africans. Because there are people who are here, a lot of them, who are not Africans, who access papers*

> *easily… none of us wants to be undocumented, we want to do as the government says… The process is just unbearable.* (Participant K, 2022)
>
> *They (the government) don't treat us equally, especially right now. We only have asylum seeker, we don't have access to a lot of things in South Africa, but when you have an ID you have a lot of things to do.* (Participant A, 2022)

Not only were participants critical of the government's policy and actions, but they also highlighted how the government's inaction towards instances of xenophobia has been equally harmful, echoing what is argued in the literature (Chiumbu & Moyo, 2018; Hiropoulos, 2019):

> *The government doesn't stick up for us… It doesn't make sense if the Constitution says we must be treated equally – it's not like that.* (Participant J, 2023)
>
> *They are ugly things that happen to foreigners, shocking things, and the government is just standing there saying nothing. Especially this thing of xenophobia, these things, how do you do that to people? I think the government really needs to implement laws that are not marginalising… So they need to work on that to allow people to feel like they are human beings.* (Participant M, 2023)

Substantiating the literature discussed (Hiropoulos, 2019; Zanker & Moyo, 2020), participants were also critical of the government's exclusionary discourse towards them, and their continuous scapegoating of migrants for the country's problems:

> *They [the government] say the foreigners must go, they must leave the country and that one is not right because we are all Africans... They say we should leave their country, but we don't agree, but what can we do? It's not our country.* (Participant C, 2022)
>
> *Yoh I don't know how they treat us because they say there are too many foreigners here and they finish all the medication and what-what and they say we must go home.* (Participant E, 2022)

According to Participant N (2023), the continuous scapegoating of migrants for socioeconomic problems is due to the government's failure to provide for the general population:

> *They [South Africans] must accept people, but they don't because they, themselves, are struggling so they blame it on the migrants. They think that things are like this because there are a lot of migrants. So to change that the government must take care of their people… so that they are satisfied so that we can also fit in. They haven't done much for their citizens.* (Participant N, 2023)

Participant F's (2022) statement is also indicative of how the government's migrant discourse emphasises difference, distinguishing between 'foreigners' and South Africans and reinforces the idea of 'insiders' and 'outsiders':

> *They treat us badly. If they never chose this one is from here, this one is not from here, then it would be fine. But when they choose this one is foreigners, they must stay this side, they can't come here, what-what.*

Such a divisive discourse fuels xenophobia sentiment in South Africa and, as Participant K (2023) explains, dehumanises migrants in the minds of the public:

> *I think the government, when they are uttering statements like the ministers or whatever, they should not say things that make their people think we are nonhumans. Especially this thing of sending people back, because most of the people who come here, they came for greener pastures and they don't have anything to go back to… So whatever they are saying, they should make sure it's not making people think that the foreigners are not humans.* (Participant K, 2023)

Another example of structural violence described by participants was health xenophobia. Some participants, like Participant C, were refused healthcare because they could not produce certain documentation:

> *Now I need to go to Groote Schuur [a big Cape Town public hospital], but because of the papers I can't go. Yeah, because of my eye; I have glaucoma that is disturbing me, but whenever I go to the clinic or hospital they ask me*

> *for my permit and I don't have it so now I can't get the treatment. Even for the children, at Red Cross, they ask me when I'm going.* (Participant C, 2022)

In Participant C's case, she could not access the glaucoma treatment she needed because she did not have the correct papers. On top of this, her children were refused treatment. Seven participants also experienced poor treatment when seeking healthcare from clinics and hospitals, such as name-calling or extremely inattentive care:

> *Yeah for the hospital, it's a big problem because they say "foreigner". And the Xhosa don't talk nicely to foreigners. Even when I was pregnant with this child, they didn't help me. They shout. And this lady, the Xhosa, she didn't talk nicely to the foreigner. They don't treat us like the patient. They treat like the dog.* (Participant H, 2022)

> *Even at the hospital they say that… especially when they know you are a foreigner like when you are going to give birth, they treat you very badly. They don't treat you the way they are supposed to treat other people. They were shouting at you like "why are you guys giving birth here in South Africa?" and calling us names and all those things… Sometimes even you are calling the nurses like 'the baby is here' and the nurse is saying 'just wait, no not 45et'. Until sometime the baby is just coming in by itself and then they find the baby's out. Yeah, it's really difficult for us.* (Participant A, 2022)

Participants also spoke of discrimination by healthcare practitioners between South Africans and migrants:

> *They don't treat us like South Africans. Like if you have cancer, you will die in this country. They won't treat you. They will just ask you for a lot of money and they know you can't pay, but if you are South African they will help… and during Covid they were more focused on South Africans than the foreigners. So yes, maybe they did help, but not in the same way. Inequality.* (Participant L, 2023)

Discrimination and poor healthcare service were cited as especially problematic when it came to reproductive care:

> *They know you are a foreigner... If you need their help and say I want help, they just say you must wait, but when there are people from here they just help them first and you maybe last one. So it's very bad… for me I can just say it's better because I can speak a little (English), but my other friends that can't speak anything, for them it's so bad. Even if they are giving birth and the baby is coming and you don't know how to speak the language, they just say no you must wait. But the baby is coming. And… they will just shout at you for no reason. So yoh it's difficult.* (Participant F, 2022)

> *When my daughter was born here she didn't come nicely, because she was born alone, without the doctor. The doctor left me alone, he just goes out. Me I say, doctor don't go out because the baby is coming, but he just goes out and then the baby is born alone.* (Participant I, 2022)

The fear of poor treatment and abuse by healthcare practitioners, as well as the fear that they will demand documentation, has prevented some participants from seeking treatment or testing when in need:

> *Eish that time everyone was very scared to go into hospital because most people are just like eish if you are sick you won't go for testing or things like that because if I go there because I'm a foreigner maybe they would just kill me. So when you are sick we don't go into the hospital because we are very scared, especially when you are a foreigner, because they treat you differently.* (Participant A, 2022)

> *I went for the HIV testing… for me it was fine, but I wish more people could go to know that they are safe. The others (migrant women) are afraid to go, and some they just don't go.* (Participant F, 2022)

Participants also experienced corruption, mismanagement and xenophobia by DHA in their attempts to access documentation. Participants highlighted a multitude of challenges in attempting to access documentation, such as having to travel far distances to departments and spending money on transport, waiting in queues for hours, and experiencing harassment, only to then be unsuccessful, often returning to DHA numerous times:

> *My first challenge is that I don't have a document to live inside South Africa and… at the time I came I was pregnant. That was very tough for me because*

> *they were saying you have to fly to Durban and then I come back and I was going there after six months to renew it. So it was very difficult for me and my kids, because I have to pay for transport to go and come now and go and come back.* (Participant A, 2022)

> *I fell pregnant with my second child and the man that I was with just left me with a month-old baby and I was not working. So there was no way I could stay there. I had to move and when I moved here, going back each and every time to renew the permit was very difficult. There was a time when I was getting the renewal here (in Cape Town), but then they said 'no, people from Joburg must go get it at Pretoria'. So I did it once or twice, but then I couldn't because … travelling with a three-year-old was very difficult.* (Participant N, 2023)

> *It was a nightmare, honestly. The reason why I still don't have the work permit is because of that [Home Affairs]. They are just doing like ping-pong stuff with you. They are inconsiderate… with Home Affairs, for two years, it has been a nightmare, going up and down and spending money on transport. They still keep on promising that it's (her work permit) coming. They say come tomorrow, come in two days, go to the Home Affairs in Bellville. Then in the end I don't have anything and they are still saying they are waiting from Pretoria… I lost money.* (Participant M, 2023)

One participant had been waiting to plead her case for asylum seeker status since 2009:

> *Since 2009 they promised us that the officer will come and listen to us, but they never come, and always we must just renew the papers. They never come and still today we are waiting.* (Participant J, 2023)

Two participants also spoke about experiences of discrimination and unlawful treatment by DHA officials, especially when trying to access birth certificates for their children born in South Africa:

> *And even our birth certificate for the child is not the same. Our own they are writing with their hands, but for South Africans they are typing. And then when we have the baby born here, the baby is from South Africa but they are writing the baby's origin as Congo.* (Participant A, 2022)

> *Yes that day when the child is born I go to Home Affairs to get the birth certificate for the children for the school, but she said she can't help me because I don't have South African ID.* (Participant E, 2022)

Some participants even stated that they would rather remain undocumented than go to DHA, as, due to their own previous experiences or hearing of experiences of other migrants, they feared deportation:

> *They say that if I go there [The DHA] they will catch me and send me home because I'm a foreigner. So I can't get that paper… we're always scared because we come here and search for something, for work, to help our parents back home. So when they catch you … yoh it's difficult.* (Participant F, 2022)

For Participant N (2023), fear of persecution by DHA held her back from telling her story of abuse in her home country, when applying for asylum-seeker status:

> *They [Home Affairs] are chasing out people. So I had to change my interview because I was scared. I couldn't tell them the real reason I left. So I just told them my life was in danger, but they said it wasn't convincing. I didn't tell them the full story of what happened to me, that I was raped. Because the lady that was there told me that all those people who are saying their life is in danger and they can't go back (to Congo), they are chasing them. I couldn't tell them my bad experience, that I was molested and stuff. I couldn't tell my story because I was scared.* (Participant N, 2023)

Not only did this fear silence the participant, preventing her from sharing her experiences of gender based violence (GBV) and voicing her narrative, but, by not disclosing the details of why she was forced to flee her country, the participant's plea for asylum status was found 'unconvincing'. According to the participant, this is the reason she "doesn't have good documents until now" (Participant N, 2023).

Participants also explained how recently the documentation process has become an online operation, but rather than addressing inaccessibility and exclusion, they found this change has merely proliferated it:

> *I didn't go to Home Affairs this time because we are not allowed to go there anymore. Everything is online. We have to request everything online, like the*

> *asylum paper. Then they will give you an appointment and they will tell you which day you must come and then they will give you your paper. So I sent my request, but they told me to come in 2025… 2025 is very far. So how am I going to live this year.* (Participant L, 2023)

The corruption, mismanagement, and xenophobia by DHA officials make the process of becoming documented near to impossible, and tellingly, only one woman held an asylum-seeker permit at the time of the interview. Many of the women had previously had temporary permits but had either given up on the arduous process of renewal, were still waiting for documents from DHA, or had their renewal requests rejected.

Thus, the biggest challenge referred to by all participants was their inability to access documentation, as they saw their absence of documentation as creating a magnitude of barriers and vulnerabilities in their lives. For example, nine participants lamented the multiple issues they had experienced in trying to access documentation, which they perceived as preventing them from finding employment:

> *Even some of our friends that want to get some work or something, because of the papers they can't get any… A lot of them just have to do the handwork, some of them even have experience with the teaching and stuff, but because of the papers they just have to do the handwork so that they can survive in this country.* (Participant C, 2022)

> *I don't have a document. So I have learnt some courses that can help me to work, even to open my own business, but I don't have money to start a business. I first need to work and save so that I can start something, but without that document, I can't do anything.* (Participant L, 2023)

Participants also expressed how those who are able to find employment are often subjected to abuse and discrimination in the workplace, as employers take advantage of migrants' precarious situation and, without documentation, they are unable to demand their worker's rights:

> *They give us different salaries. For us, they give us a little money and they give them much more. But we are working together, doing the same work. If they can stop that, then maybe it can be better.* (Participant F, 2022)

> *One time when I asked for my UIF, one of the operation's managers … cause I have a registered SARS number … so they were deducting UIF money on my pay slip, but now comes UIF and they are saying they can't give me because I don't have papers, but they were still deducting my money, so where was that money? She told me she has nothing to do with me because I don't have papers. So if this happened to me, it would have happened to more foreigners.'* (Participant K, 2023)

Participant K's situation highlights how her absence of documentation left her vulnerable to exploitation by an employer due to the barriers she faces in accessing justice without documentation that can protect her rights in the formal sector. These barriers that prevent access to constitutional rights were expressed by other participants who struggled to access health care, safety, justice and legal aid:

> *If I don't have papers… I don't have any access to anything. Like if I'm sick maybe I can just go to the hospital and tell them I'm still waiting for my papers. Maybe they … help me, but then after that they say I have to bring my papers… As long as you are a foreigner it's like you don't have any access to anything. You can't even go to a lawyer, because… they take a long process and we don't have time for that… We don't have access to go because I need to go to work so I can get something for my kids to eat so for us that it's very difficult… we are struggling every day and we can't do anything because of the asylum seeker.* (Participant A, 2022)

> *My main one is that I don't have the papers; because when something happen now or there is a problem and I go to the police they say where is your permit…. So I don't want to. Even with the justice and the lawyers I am scared, because already they tell me I don't have the papers, I should go home, and I am illegal staying here.* (Participant C, 2022)

These findings convey how prior to the pandemic and the implementation of the lockdown, exposure to vulnerability, violence and exclusion were part and parcel of migrant women's everyday lives. The threat of direct violence was perceived by most participants as looming large over their day-to-day experiences, as they live in fear of seemingly imminent xenophobic attacks and/or other violent crimes (gendered or otherwise). One participant referred to a close encounter with GBV where men tried

to take advantage of her intersecting vulnerabilities, as a woman and as a migrant, but which she was lucky to escape. Participants also highlighted very tangible experiences of structural violence. They discussed experiences of discrimination and indifference by the police towards them, which restricted their access to justice and police protection. Inaccessibility of health care was also commonly cited. This was often due to healthcare workers insisting on seeing patients' documentation before providing care, or due to participants' fear of poor treatment, abuse, and/or deportation by healthcare workers, preventing them from seeking treatment. In many cases where participants said they could access healthcare, they were met with verbal abuse and extremely inattentive, brash care.

These experiences demonstrate participants' loss of security and protection, the "second loss" that, for Arendt (2004) (as cited in Parekh, 2008:27), pushes one into the state of being "rightless". It is this distinct deprivation, as well as the deprivation of community, that deprives one of a place in the world and makes the provision of constitutional rights meaningless, for they cannot be accessed or actualised.

Experiences of corruption, mismanagement, and xenophobia by DHA, were also referred to by participants, which they saw as creating multiple barriers to their ability to access documentation. For many, these barriers prevented them from renewing their temporary permits, and at the time of the interviews, all but one participant were undocumented. For participants, this inability to access documentation creates further marginalisation and exclusion from constitutional rights. Participants felt that these experiences of structural violence were largely influenced by the government's exclusionary policies, which made requirements for documentation too harsh and which discriminated against Africans; as well as its exclusionary discourse, which continuously scapegoats migrants for the government's failure to take care of their people. Participants accused the government of marking migrants as outsiders, asserting their "otherness" and "making people think that foreigners are not human" (Participant K, 2023). Then if/when xenophobic violence ensues the government remains silent and fails to respond.

These experiences of structural violence were highlighted as existing prior to South Africa's lockdown, but participants saw the measures as exacerbating these experiences. Participants spoke of greater exclusion and mismanagement by DHA

regarding the renewal of permits, largely due to the closure of Refugee Reception Offices (RRO's). This created further barriers to accessing documentation. Participants also noted greater discrimination by healthcare practitioners during the pandemic due to the shortages of staff and supplies. Finally, the government's lockdown laws and its exclusion of migrants from Covid-19 related relief measures further restricted participants' access to their constitutional rights, by pushing them deeper into poverty, exposing them to greater instances of gendered abuse and inequality and limiting their freedom and ability to access support. These findings reveal the complex relationship between change and continuity in assessing the effects of the government's response on migrant women's exposure to vulnerability. This will be further analysed in the next chapter.

Solidarity, (non)belonging and the potential for alternatives

In addition to experiences of institutional xenophobia, participants also voiced experiences of xenophobia and ostracism by surrounding community members and/or other South Africans. All participants said they had suffered hostility from South Africans and the majority also referred to experiences of verbal abuse. When asked about whether she had befriended any South Africans, Participant A (2022) answered:

> *I'm not friends of theirs… it's like we have that thing that we are foreigners and most people call us names and most of them don't like us. You can even see someone is just like saying to me if I knew where they were beating some foreigner they would be the first to go. So we don't want to be that close. Maybe one-day xenophobia happens and they're the same people that are gonna come to beat us.*

Experiences of hostility and psychological abuse by South Africans were also mentioned by Participants F and M. For Participant M, especially, these interactions damaged her sense of self-worth and belonging:

> *They treat you badly, like you are nothing… they just call us amakwerekwere*[5] *because we are foreigners. (Participant F, 2022)*
>
> *It's just people not treating you well and making you feel like what are you doing here. I remember someone told me in Home Affairs 'We don't want you*

[5] Deeply derogatory term for foreign African national used by South Africans.

> *here, go back home!' That was one of the most humiliating things, because he was shouting in front of everyone. You feel like you're nothing.*
> *(Participant M, 2023)*

This community exclusion, persistent verbal abuse and the commonality of xenophobic violence enacted against migrants by South Africans were seen to invoke constant fear among a few participants (4/14) that one day their neighbours, fellow community members, and work colleagues, will turn on them. This point was made clear by Participant J (2023):

> *They are calling us names; they are shouting at us that we need to leave. Sometimes in social media they say: 'prepare yourself, otherwise we will kill you'… We live in fear. Every year there's a period when those things happen… Some areas, personally I don't go, to because I hear of some people being abused, some of them being killed even. Especially those Uber drivers from our countries – a lot of them are killed. The last one I knew – Michelle- I know him personally. In December he was killed in Philippi. They… kidnapped him and stabbed him and threw his body away and kept his car. These things make us live in fear because there are people we know who have been killed.*

Language barrier was another issue highlighted by 7/14 participants, which they perceived as impacting their feeling of isolation and their ability to feel included in a community. Participant L (2023) expressed her difficulty communicating with people because she *"didn't know the language",* which also limited her ability to familiarise herself with her new environment and navigate the city. A few participants also conveyed how this challenge was made especially difficult by black South African's unwillingness to speak English to them:

> *What I've picked up; the isiXhosa people, you speak to them in English, they answer in their own language. You feel like you're irritating them. So the best way was not to speak to them. But now I need to speak to them for me to know where the bus stop is, where the shops are, how to get to this side.*
> (Participant K, 2023)

Participant K (2023) also highlighted how language acted as a marker of otherness:

> *The moment they hear me on the phone. They hear you are speaking Shona… or in the townships, there is a name they are calling us: amakwerekwere. Even in the taxi, they ask you something in their language and you answer in English and they start calling you amakwerekwere.*

Here, the participant conveyed how language is used as a marker of belonging/nonbeloning (Mosselson, 2010; Batisai, 2016), which is often used to isolate migrants. It creates additional barriers to navigating their new environment and their ability to forge a new home.

The question of home was another theme that transpired in the findings, as many participants (8/14) expressed that they longed to go home but felt stuck in South Africa, largely due to their shortage of money which prevented them from returning to their country of origin or moving elsewhere. This was articulated by Participant H (2022):

> *There is so much scaring in South Africa… I'm feeling I want to go home, but I don't have money, because I don't have any business here… Even I'm scared now because this behaviour is not nice.*

For some participants, who left their countries because of socio-political unrest, returning home was not an option for them. However, they remained hopeful that one day, when the situation is stable, they could return:

> *I do miss home, but for now there are a lot of things happening there - war and whatever. If I had money I would think about going somewhere else, try to start fresh somewhere else. I'll go back home one day when everything is better.* (Participant J, 2023)

> *The situation in my country is not fixed at all. People there are suffering and we have war so that doesn't give you the desire to go back, but I pray that one day it will be fixed so I can go back.* (Participant M, 2023)

Participants' longing for home was largely influenced by their separation from family members, especially their children. Participant E (2022) expressed, *"I miss home because I want to see the family, but I can't go because I don't have money"* and Participant G (2022) stated, *"I miss Malawi, I miss my children, I miss my family"*. These feelings of missing home were often aggravated by the loss of a family member

or loved one back home, especially in the case of Participant K who lost her father and was unable to be there for his burial:

> *My father got sick two years ago. He was old and he had a stroke, and because of Corona when my father got sick I couldn't go to see him for all the time he got sick and then he died. I couldn't even reach home before he was buried. I only arrived the day after. So it was very difficult for me. So now I went back home this Christmas because I was so eager to see my kids, but then I had to come back again … Now coming back I hate being apart from them just because when I saw them they said: 'mamma we miss you, ahh daddy!' And I think how did I go five years without seeing them, and now I miss them even more than before. It's worse now that I've seen them and I want to be with them.* (Participant K, 2023)

Participant K conveyed how these moments of loss often remind migrants of what they are missing or giving up by being in South Africa, such as time spent with their family and/or witnessing the milestones of their children. This heightens experiences of longing for home.

Despite these feelings of longing for home, participants also highlighted experiences of solidarity and friendship in Cape Town, which, in some cases, supported participants when in need and helped them gain a sense of community. Many participants (9/14) shared experiences of material support from friends (mostly other migrant women) in times of crisis, as well as from their mosque or church:

> *My friends, they treat me nicely. Sometimes they help with the rent or give food or clothes.* (Participant H, 2022)

> *Yes, they [the Mosque] help. We take Madrassa classes so those people help us a lot. Even in Covid time they always send food, they send money.* (Participant F, 2022)

All of the women introduced to me through Scalabrini (five) referred to the organisation as an enormous site of support, both psychologically and materially:

> *At Scalabrini I have made friends, because they helped us with some courses. So when we come, we are a lot of foreigners and we just make friends*

> *between us… Scalabrini helped me a lot. They also helped me with some food.* (Participant L)

> *The only support I received was from Scalabrini you know, because when I lost the job I was struggling … Then I contacted them and I got all this training, and there were wonderful people and staff, and I also just got some support, because when you are struggling you know R30, R20, it means a lot. And also just interacting with people and speaking to them; they are open, they are understanding.* (Participant M)

One participant also shared experiences of South Africans protecting her and other migrants when crime and violence erupted in the community, especially in the case of business looting:

> *We are fine with the community and no one ever abuses us or makes us not feel comfortable… Whenever they are around for me I'm not scared because they also used to protect us. Like for the Covid, during that lockdown, they used to come and break the shops and steal stuff, but those around don't want them to touch our shops and they make people pack their houses to make the houses to be safe there.* (Participant C, 2022)

Participants C (2022) also said that the current community leaders were sympathetic to migrants and tried to promote the inclusion of everyone in the community. However, this promotion of inclusion is unstable and depends on the community leaders at the time.

These instances of solidarity and inclusion helped participants to gain a sense of community, and some felt that over time spent in South Africa, feelings of belonging began to emerge:

> *I have South African friends, some white friends, a few Xhosa friends, also some from Congo. And because of Scalabrini as well, I have managed to network with people from different races, because here when we come there are Zimbabweans, Malawians, Congolese, Zambians… so I have a good network.* (Participant K, 2023)

> *They are also amazing people. I go to church; they are South Africans, black people, wonderful people. And maybe it's that once you know each other and*

> *you can appreciate each other, it changes… I mean the first couple of years, and even after, you don't feel this sense of belonging, but after a few years you get used to it and you understand the background and stuff. You appreciate now where you live and the people around you.* (Participant M, 2023)

As highlighted by Participant M, the role of religion was closely linked to experiences of solidarity and support. Eleven participants emphasised the role of their churches and mosques in providing support, materially (in the form of food, clothes and small monetary donations) and spiritually and emotionally, conveyed by Participants K and L:

> *Fortunately the church we were attending at that time, the pastor sourced some donors who were providing vegetables and bread, sometimes rice, sometimes sugar. So we started receiving food from church… if church was not there, I don't know what we were going to do.* (Participant K, 2023)

> *My church also helped me, emotionally and spiritually. Because having delt with this stress and abuse, in my heart I was saying I won't forgive because I couldn't forgive, but it's like you're drinking poison so someone else will die, you see. It was very bad for me. I was trying to punish them for doing what they did to me, but I was killing myself. So I didn't know I was not punishing them, but myself. So the church helped me in this area. They showed me how to let go and to forgive those people who betrayed you. It was your sister, and its painful, but you have to let it go.* (Participant L, 2023)

Religion also helped some participants remain hopeful and determined:

> *I have a belief. I believe that there is a God somewhere and from that belief I'm just managing to do these things. I just ask for strength and courage for myself.* (Participant J, 2023)

The findings demonstrate how feelings of 'Longing and lack of belonging' were conveyed by participants as existing throughout their stay in South Africa. Participants' experiences of structural violence, as well as the fear of direct violence, are compounded by common instances of name-calling and other acts of discrimination directed at migrants. Participants highlighted how they were often insulted or ignored by other South Africans, and many felt that friendships with South

Africans were unattainable because of their overriding prejudice towards migrants. These experiences constantly asserted participants' nonbelonging to South Africa, and many felt isolated and excluded from their community and the country at large. Most participants longed to go home, either now, or in the future. For them, South Africa is not seen as home, but as merely a physical place of residence. Despite these commonly cited experiences of hostility and exclusion by South Africans, participants also highlighted the existence of "amazing people" (Participant M, 2023) who have offered solidarity and friendship, as well as material and psychological support. For some, these instances of solidarity helped them to gain a sense of community and inclusion, but for the majority of participants, these instances were not enough to invoke a feeling of belonging in South Africa.

These findings also conveyed how NGOs and church groups become essential in filling gaps created by the government's inability to provide constitutional rights to participants. However, as Arendt (in Parekh, 2008:28) argues, the lives of the "rightless" are merely prolonged:

> …due to charity and not to right… for no law exists which could force the nations to feed them; their freedom of movement, if they have it at all, gives them no right to residence which even the jailed criminal enjoys as a matter of course; and their freedom of opinion is a fool's freedom, for nothing they think matters anyhow.

Thus the support offered by Scalabrini and/or church groups, what Arendt (in Parekh, 2008) calls "charity", cannot provide the sense of community and protection/security, which Arendt sees as fundamental to the ability to access rights. This theorisation of human rights was corroborated by widespread perceptions of participants that, although some sense of support and community have been offered by Scalabrini and their churches, they still feel alone and isolated, unable to forge a new home in South Africa.

This was made evident by almost all participants (11/14) who, despite these instances of solidarity and support, still felt they had no support, especially during the lockdown. Participants highlighted how they had to take up various new strategies to sustain themselves and their families, which I call survival tactics During the lockdown,

participants were struggling to meet their needs and had to employ daily tactics to survive, such as stretching out limited resources:

> *So there was no food, maybe if you're eating in the morning then the next time you eat is at night, because you have to save food for the next day.* (Participant F, 2022)

Many participants (seven) mentioned "small money" as helping them survive during lockdown. This "small money" refers to tiny sums of money which participants would have to try and make last. Some examples of how participants did this include running a hair salon; doing odd jobs; and getting small donations from the mosque or church. Some women also showed incredible initiative and agency by employing new business tactics:

> *I only had R700 and I had to go and buy a chip fryer for 600 and then with the R100 I bought a kg of potatoes, fish oil. Then the following day I wrote a note on the gate saying 'chips for sale'. So I started selling those chips, and also burgers.* (Participant K, 2023)

> *What I did, just around where I was living, there was a man from Malawi making masks and I knew how to sew a little bit in my country. So I went there. It was difficult for me to communicate, but I just made him understand that I want to earn something so I can help myself. He was very good to me, and he said I can come and we will help each other. So in this way I learned how to sew a little bit and then after six months I got a job in the factory making masks. So that money helped me to rent my home and to survive.* (Participant L, 2023)

Unfortunately, these instances of agency employed through survival tactics were unreliable and seldom bore fruit. Participants described how they are constantly forced to adapt to barriers and come up with new survival tactics to address ever-emerging challenges.

Participants expressed a range of emotions, challenges and opportunities that have emerged throughout their life in South Africa and the idea of 'Hope/hopelessness' emerged as competing, but also coalescing themes throughout the interview process. All participants came to South Africa searching for "greener pastures" (Participant K, 2023) in the hope of finding greater job opportunities and/or fleeing sociopolitical

unrest and violence back home. Unfortunately, their hopes have been squashed, experiencing similar struggles to those back home (such as shortage of jobs and money to buy food), which are now compounded by additional challenges, as a result of their migrant status:

> *Yeah it's different, but also the same, because there is a shortage of money to send back home.* (Participant B, 2022)

> *We thought that we'd be working to have some money and send the money home. But now if you're not working it's very difficult because we have the children and we have to buy the food. So yeah it's hard.* (Participant E, 2022)

> *I was expecting a lot. I never thought I would be staying here for five years. We just wanted to come to raise money… to buy a taxi… and come back to our kids; Put the taxi on the roads and then we get something out of it for our kids. But because of the jobs we were getting because we didn't have papers we couldn't get the money. We never thought we would stay here for five years.* (Participant K, 2023)

Participant K, like many others, had her dream shattered due to the multiple barriers she encountered as a migrant in South Africa. After their hopes have been crushed, many participants expressed their desire to go home, but have been confined by their impoverishment, resigning themselves to their entrapment in South Africa:

> *I'm feeling happy, I'm feeling scared, so sometimes… this is my life. This is happening, and we are scared and it's not nice behaviour, because we are poor so we stay here.* (Participant H)

This disillusionment and resignation by participants to their harsh reality adds to their increasing hopeless due to their feeling of being alone, unsupported and overwhelmed by their daily challenges:

> *I get no support, and I am not working. My husband is working, but it's small money. It's not enough for food and to pay rent and to send back to Malawi. So every day it is difficult … how can I be happy here now when I'm not working? Because everything and everybody needs money and all the money I have goes to Malawi for my children.* (Participant G, 2022)

> *I wish to get nice work to get money so I can help people. Because no one helps my parents and no one is helping me. My daddy passed away a long time ago and my mommy… she needs help.* (Participant I, 2022)

> *So I was there to do everything. So those things make me… like sometimes I feel weak…. I am constantly under pressure.* (Participant A, 2022)

Feelings of hopelessness were buttressed by the fear and uncertainty brought on by the government's Covid-19 response, around when lockdown measures will be lifted and how long these measures could be survived:

> *Yeah we were sacred. Yoh, we don't know what will happen. Maybe it could be weeks and we have no food.* (Participant D, 2022)

> *We still feel that fear, and when you have that fear you can't go anywhere. Yeah things are very difficult.* (Participant A, 2022)

> *Yeah you can think through it all the time and you can get a headache every day because of thinking of that stuff. So it's very difficult.* (Participant F, 2022)

A few participants (5/14) bewailed how these experiences have left them disappointed about their life chances and unhappy about the way their life has turned out:

> *I feel like I was not supposed to be here, because everyone has their own plans for their life, but sometimes I feel that being here makes me like… I'm not getting what I thought my life was supposed to be like.* (Participant N, 2023)

These experiences of fear, uncertainty and structural violence, made worse by the government's Covid-19 response were highlighted by participants as creating heightened feelings of hopelessness, as they were plunged deeper into poverty, excluded from any support, unknowing of how much longer they will have to endure. Despite the multiple hardships suffered by participants, some displayed amazing optimism and hopefulness about their future, encouraged by religious faith, as well as experiences of support from Scalabrini, mosques/churches and friends within the community. Thus both hopelessness and hope emerged at different times as participants struggled to navigate their experiences.

Examples of hope, spurred on by instances of solidarity and support, as well as self-determination and incredible inner strength, also highlight 'Agency and alternatives' as an important theme, offering a discourse other than that of migrant women as passive victims, exposed unrelenting violence and exclusion. Although many participants' experiences were dominated by hardships and conveyed multiple instances of discrimination, instances of agency and profound optimism were also demonstrated, encouraging participants to stay hopeful, as well as to find innovative ways of overcoming challenges. Examples of community support and solidarity from different people, despite their nationality or race, also confront the dominant migration discourse of exclusion and begin to illustrate a way forward towards a more inclusive form of citizenship.

Alternative citizenship ideals were also offered by some participants when asked what the government needs to change in South Africa to make it a more equal and inclusive place for all, expressing Humanist and/or Pan-Africanist ideas about what citizenship in South Africa should look like:

> *We are all one African country, we are the same. So we should all be united to be one. We should look at ourselves as brothers and sisters.* (Participant C, 2022)

> *So we just want to be equal. We are all human beings. There is nothing that changes South African, Congolese, Zimbabwean. We need the same treatment at the hospital, at work, because we all have feelings. So just think about others also, how we are feeling.* (Participant L, 2023)

> *They [the government] need to talk to people because many people don't know what is in the Constitution. They think that when someone comes into their country they are here to steal this, to take that, without knowing that some people can bring good things that can change the country. So they need to speak to some people in those areas to make them understand and teach them how to live with other cultures, other people.* (Participant J, 2023)

These ideals of citizenship emphasise the need to treat all people equally and with compassion, regardless of their identity. Participant J (2023) also highlighted the need for the government to enforce and educate people on South Africa's constitutional principles, namely the importance of tolerance amongst diversity, and how such

diversity can be beneficial for South Africa. The potential benefits of tolerance and cooperation among diversity were emphasised by Participant K (2023) who described the importance of African regionalism and maintaining strong relationships between African countries:

> *And the government should instil in the minds of the people that one day it might be them on the other side because you never know what will happen. At one point Zimbabwe was the breadbasket of Africa, now it's South Africa. In DRC, now there's war but there are gold mines there. One day it might be Congo, which is the breadbasket.*

Such narratives introduced by participants begin to offer an alternative citizenship discourse based on inclusion, compassion, equality and cooperation among differences.

CHAPTER 5

Evaluating the coloniality of citizenship in South Africa

Introduction

This chapter evaluates whether the government's response can be seen as an enduring legacy of an exclusionary citizenship paradigm, which draws boundaries between insiders and outsiders, distinguishing between those deserving of protection and those who are not. The continuity of exclusion and enduring coloniality will be argued by examining the question of attribution and temporality in the findings of vulnerability and then situating this within the theoretical framework of *coloniality of citizenship*.

The historicity of exclusionary citizenship

In order to evaluate the citizenship paradigm in South Africa and the endurance of coloniality, attribution and temporality are important concepts that need to be analysed. By attribution, I refer to the extent to which participants' experiences of vulnerability can be attributed to the government's response to Covid-19, as well as what these experiences of vulnerability, highlighted by participants, convey about their access to citizenship. This will enable state complicity in access to citizenship to be determined. The temporality of such access then also needs to be understood i.e. has the government's response to Covid-19 marked a substantial shift in migrant women's access to citizenship, in other words what has changed from before lockdown to now?

The question of temporality and attribution are important considerations for addressing the research question. This research does not intend to objectively measure these concepts, but rather, they are evaluated according to participants' subjective perceptions about how their lives were affected by the government's lockdown measures. One of the key findings emergent from the data was that of heightened vulnerability as a result of the lockdown measures. Participants perceived the government's Covid-19 response as pushing them deeper into poverty and limiting their ability to access their needs. They felt the lockdown put additional burdens on them as women, intensifying their responsibilities as carers, physically and financially, and limiting their freedom, while also exposing women to higher chances of abuse. The damage to participants' physical well-being both produced and reinforced feelings

of fear and hopelessness, which participants perceived as having lasting implications on their mental health.

Another important aspect in addressing the question of heightened vulnerability is changed exposure to direct and structural violence. Although participants drew attention to how the lockdown exposed migrant women to greater instances of GBV, as a result of the isolation measures, no participants expressed personal experiences of direct violence that can be connected to the government's response. They did, however, highlight their increased exposure to structural violence resulting from lockdown measures, such as additional barriers to documentation and healthcare, and further socioeconomic marginalisation due to exclusionary government policies. These findings made clear that participants perceive the government's response as having heightened their exposure to vulnerability.

Participants' constant exposure to vulnerability severely curtailed their ability to access citizenship, both in terms of access to rights, enshrined in South Africa's Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), especially the Bill of Rights, and as a subjective experience of belonging. Although I initially intended to analyse access to citizenship using the terms 'full' and 'partial' citizenship, during the analysis process, I found these terms too simplistic to describe participants' daily experiences as they constantly navigate evolving boundaries and challenges in their struggle to access citizenship.

Table 1 below captures a summary of the experiences presented in Chapter 4 which demonstrate access and lack of access to citizenship, prior to Covid-19 and during and after the implementation of the lockdown measures.

Table 1: Temporality of access to citizenship

Access to citizenship	**Prior to Covid-19**	**During and after the lockdown measures**
Access to citizenship rights	Participants expressed limited access to health care, especially reproductive health care. No participants have ever had access to social security. Participants feel their access to justice and legal recourse are extremely limited. Limited freedom of movement due	Participants described worsened access to health care due to constrained institutional capacity which heightened discrimination. Further impoverishment and daily struggle to access sufficient food and pay rent. Participants also described their loss of dignity due to their inability to provide for themselves

	to fear of abuse and distrust of officials. Participants highlighted experiences of discrimination in police protection.	(and in some cases their children), sometimes having to resort to begging neighbours or going to churches/mosques for donations. Inequality in design and implementation of government's response to Covid-19 → discriminating against migrants in Covid related relief measures and marginalising poor black women due to the absence of a gendered response.
Access to subjective sense of belonging	Experiences of structural violence, verbal abuse and discrimination by South Africans, as well as fear of xenophobic violence made participants feel excluded and unwanted, severely limiting their subjective feeling of belonging. Many participants longed to go back home, either presently or in the future, and did not feel South Africa had become a home. Instances of solidary, friendship and support were also highlighted, which helped participants to feel a part of a community and provided experiences of inclusion.	Feelings of exclusion reasserted by the government's response, which made participants feel invisible to the government. Participants perceived the government's response as confirmation that the government does not care about migrants, and some were unsurprised by the response because they have never received support or felt included in state policy.

Table 1 conveys how participants' access to rights were already extremely limited before the government's implementation of its lockdown measures, and how they were further curtailed by the government's Covid-19 response. Access to a subjective feeling of belonging also seems to have been largely absent throughout participants' time in South Africa. Experiences of inclusion through solidarity, friendship and a sense of community did provide a few participants with a feeling of belonging, but the overwhelming majority of participants felt that these experiences were not enough to invoke belonging due to overwhelming feelings of exclusion, and no participants perceived South Africa as their 'home'. 'Home' in this research is conceptualised as a feeling of belonging, intimacy, and security (Dube, 2022:228). From these findings, I can conclude that the government's response did not bring about a substantial shift in access to citizenship but rather worsened it by reinforcing barriers to accessing rights and reasserting participants' nonbelonging in South Africa.

Moreover, using Arendt's (in Parekh, 2008) argument of 'rightlessness', these findings also convey how participants have been pushed into this state, a state in which human dignity has been stripped away. Participants' deprivation of community and the ability to find a new home, as well as their loss of protection and/or security has deprived them "of a place in the world, of a visible identity" (Parekh, 2008:28). This loss of humanity strips participants of the right to have rights making inclusive constitutional provisions, granting rights to all those who reside in South Africa, meaningless. For Arendt (in Parekh 2008:28), these two losses "are more fundamental to the loss of the right to citizenship". However, I argue rather that the state of 'rightlessness' *is* the loss of citizenship (as it is conceptualised in this research), as lack of access to citizenship due to *the coloniality of citizenship.* This entails the dehumanisation of people, their expulsion from humanity to which Arendt (in Parekh, 2008) refers, which both justifies their exclusion and further prevents them from gaining inclusion and access.

Boundary (re)production and hierarchization

Participants responses show the ways in which the government's response to Covid-19 heightened the participants' exposure to vulnerability and further limited their access to citizenship, but what do these findings say about the institution of citizenship in South Africa?

According to Boatcă and Roth (2016), the *coloniality of citizenship* is an institution of citizenship that reinforces the structural distribution of unequal and gendered citizenship rights. The absence of a gendered lens in the government's response deprived women of protection against rampant GBV, exposing them to greater instances of abuse and exploitation, to which poor black women were especially vulnerable. The lockdown measures also exposed women to additional burdens of care, while limiting their freedom and their ability to support themselves and their dependents, heightening gender inequality. For migrant women, this burden was compounded by their exclusion from child support grants or any other government support. The government's exclusionary response towards migrants reasserts their marginalisation and solidifies the discourse of migrants as 'outsiders' though banning them from working, while excluding them from government aid that would help them to survive during the period; and closing RROs, which further restricted their access

to documentation. Moreover, participants described how this response by the government reduced their feeling of dignity, as they were plunged into desperation and abject poverty, reliant on others for sustenance and struggling daily to survive. Thus, not only did the government's response to Covid-19 structurally distribute unequal and gendered citizenship rights, but it involved the "active reduction of people" (Lugones, 2010), relegating migrant women to the very periphery of citizenship.

Again temporality needs to be considered and analysed. The government's response to Covid-19 conveys a clearly exclusionary migrant policy and discourse in complete misalignment with the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights, but can this exclusionary response be seen as a divergence from the existent citizenship paradigm in South Africa?

The findings revealed extensive experiences of structural violence prior to the implementation of the lockdown, many of which have been produced and/ or accentuated by exclusionary government discourse and policy. One of the central policy issues stressed by participants was the harsh and discriminatory requirements for accessing documentation. Participants felt that the government made access to documentation nearly impossible for Africans, while more desirable immigrants had easier access. This inability to access documentation pushes participants into an endless state of vulnerability and precarity. The findings also revealed how the participants perceived an already established exclusionary migrant discourse by the South African government, highlighting how the government continuously scapegoats them for socioeconomic problems, avoiding accountability for their failure "to take care of their people" (Participant N, 2023). Participants also highlighted how the government's migrant discourse emphasises difference, distinguishing between 'foreigners' and South Africans, reinforcing the idea of migrants as 'outsiders'. This othering is accompanied by the dehumanisation of migrants in government discourse, which participants perceived as accentuating the idea amongst South Africans that "foreigners are not humans" (Participant K, 2023). The pre-existence of an exclusionary migrant discourse by the state was also asserted in my interview with Sharon Ekambaram (2022) from Lawyers for Human rights:

> *And the kind of statements that the minister of Home Affairs makes, the various government officials saying that this country is being swamped with undocumented Zimbabweans and they are causing the crime, and a direct consequence of that was the death of Elvis Nyathi in Diepsloot, where there is on record a councillor speaking to one of the news media and saying it's the Zimbabweans who are undocumented that are causing the crime and we don't have enough police to bring about law enforcement. The next day Elvis was burnt to death. So that's the scapegoating that contributes to violence and incredible discrimination and prejudice against black African brothers and sisters coming to this country.*

This interview was illuminating on the temporality of exclusionary migrant policy in South Africa. In this interview, Sharon drew attention to the historicity of institutionalised xenophobia in South Africa, as a legacy of apartheid and as a continuation of its racialized exclusionary policies. She argues that Covid-19 was merely "the tipping point" (Sharon Ekambaram, 2022).

While South Africa has often been hailed for its progressive migrant policies due to inclusive provisions for asylum-seekers and refugees under the South African Refugees Act, the government's "failure to regularise the national asylum system, bureaucratic inefficiency, and corruption" have created "a backlog in the processing and adjudication of documents" (Mukumbang et al., 2020:2). Thus, these inclusive provisions seldom result in material benefits for migrants, who are unable to access required documentation. In addition to the ruling party's *"failure to enforce progressive legislation on the management of the movement of people in our region"* (Sharon Ekambaram, 2022), several systemic reactionary shifts to the right have been made regarding migration policy, the most recent being the drastic amendments to the Refugee Bill. These amendments, promulgated in January 2020, *"sees the South African government moving towards keeping people in camps"* in sharp contrast with South Africa's refugee policy, which speaks about the urban integration of refugees.

Over the years the government's actions have continuously contradicted the principles enshrined in the Bill of Rights. During her interview, Sharon Ekambaram (2022), paraphrasing Thuli Madonsela, contends that:

> *Unlike the National Party, which made clear that it was a fascist right-wing organisation party, and it spoke right and it acted right and it carried out its policies in a very fascist right-wing manner, the problem with the ruling party is that they speak left and they act right.*

Thus, while populist shifts in migration policy have been occurring throughout the last decade in South Africa, the degree of the government's institutionalised xenophobia and exclusionary policy has been hidden by its continual lip service to constitutional promises. Ekambaram (2022) drew attention to these contradictions by referring to recent examples of discriminatory government action in contrast with the release, in 2019, of both the National Action Plan to combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances ([NAP], 2020), and the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide ([NSP-GBV], 2020). These are both extensive and progressive plans that have the potential to address violence and inequality faced by migrant women, but whether they have had any substantial influence on government policy and discourse is tenuous, at best. Table 2 below examines the extent of government contradictions by comparing the aims of these plans alongside examples of state action.

Table 2: Government Contradictions

Government Plan:	**Intention of Plan**	**Reality of government's action prior to Covid-19**	**Reality of government's action during and after lockdown**
NAP	Aims to assist the state in realising international human rights obligations related to the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and address, equality, equity and discrimination (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. 2020:14). Gives special emphasis to vulnerable and marginalised groups and their right to live in a non-discriminatory society (Department of Justice and	Discriminatory requirement for accessing documentation, creating an extremely vulnerable group of undocumented people, excluded from a range of necessities. Continuation of apartheid's "two-gates" or "two-door" framework, which only grants access to specific categories of immigrants and closes access to others, creating only temporary pathways for African migrants (Moyo, 2021) which creates a "hierarchy of eligibility … structured	Discriminatory Covid-19 related relief measures that excluded all those without a South African ID (later extended to those with refugee status after the threat of litigation by Scalabrini), heightening the vulnerability of the most vulnerable groups, in direct contradiction with aim of non-discrimination, protection of vulnerable groups, promotion of dignity and protection of human rights.

	Constitutional Development. 2020:12). Central aim to promote human dignity and increase coherence and effectiveness of measures to combat racism and xenophobia (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. 2020:14).	along gendered, racialized, class-based, and nationalised distinctions" (Baey, 2010:12). Unjust, racialised access to citizenship, for example Janusz Walus, symbol of right-wing fascism, given residence in South Africa to serve his parole, in spite of the pain he has caused for many in South Africa and the ideals he invokes (Sharon Ekambaram, 2022). Numerous reactionary shifts further exclude migrants, especially in terms of economic marginalisation, for example: - Employment and Labour Dept drafting of the National Labour Migration Policy, which would introduce quotas on the number of migrants that could legally be employed in various sectors of the economy (Mahlakoana, 2022). - Gauteng Township Economic Development Draft Bill (published 30th September 2020) aims to exclude migrants without permanent residence status in South Africa from "owning and operating businesses in the Gauteng township economy" (Kruyer, 2020).	
NSP-GBV	The NSP "sets out to provide a cohesive strategic framework to guide the national response" to the crisis of GBV and femicide, "founded on women's constitutionally entrenched right to be free from all forms of violence" (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. 2020:22)	Women migrants bear the brunt of vulnerability due to absence of documentation, often having to deal with their own plight of being undocumented, as well as their children's (challenges of getting their kids into school, accessing health care for kids or their own reproductive care, and they are often the ones who	This trend of gender neutrality in government policy continued in the government's response to Covid-19, creating a range of heightened vulnerabilities: increased exposure to GBV and absence of protection, increased burden of care compounded by

	Aims to improve accountability, coordination and leadership to strategically address GBV and femicide, address systemic inequalities resulting in vulnerability and lack of safety, as well as strengthen the response to inequality and structural drivers that propel GBV (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. 2020:37). In the forward, President Cyril Ramaphosa (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2020) declares: "We spare no effort until this country's women and children are safe, can live, work and play in freedom, and their rights upheld".	engage with the DHA) (Sharon Ekambaram, 2022). There has continuously been no reference to the intersection between gender and migration, which creates a range of vulnerabilities, in government's migration policy. Failure of government to address the heightened risks of violence, abuse and exploitation faced by women migrants (Farley, 2019:6).	extreme financial insecurity, isolation and absence of physical and psychological support

The above table highlights how what the government says and does are completely misaligned. Cyril Ramaphosa's statement in the NSP (Department of Justice, 2020), that no effort will be spared until women and children are safe and can enjoy their freedom was published just a few days before the nationwide lockdown. The complete absence of a gendered lens in the government's response to Covid-19 renders his statement absurd. As Sharon Ekambaram (2022) put it in her interview: *"The contradictions are glaring".*

While the government continues to insist on the importance of the Bill of Rights and its loyalty to its principles, its Covid-19 response exposed the emptiness of these claims. The government's response systemically stripped migrant women of their access to basic human rights, plunging them deeper into poverty, heightening their precarity and exposing them to greater instances of direct and structural violence. The marginalisation of those constructed as non-citizens by the government, and thus undeserving of its support and protection during the pandemic, is indicative of a racialised and gendered citizenship institution in South Africa that classifies 'insider'/'outsider' and 'deserving'/'undeserving'. This relates closely to Gqola's

(2021) description of the ways in which our hegemonic valuation system has historically relied on binary thinking to position certain individuals as desirable/undesirable. Through this distinction, ideological categories are made. Gqola (2021:19) conveys how women and other sexually minoritised people "are rendered as socially female, and therefore safe to violate". Those made female (which does not always equal women) are subjected to the "Female Fear Factory" (Gqola, 2021), which manufactures fear and control through both violence and the threat of violence. Similarly, for Gqola (2021), violent masculinity, expunged in nationalist narratives, is used to mark, as well as produce the 'foreigner' through the use of boundaries. These boundaries are themselves unstable, because: "as a process [identity] operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries" (Gqola, 2021:165). Thus the boundary 'foreigner'/ 'local'; 'insider'/'outsider' requires discursive work, which both maintains difference and produces the 'foreigner' as undesirable/other/unhuman (Gqola, 2021:165-166). Through the process of boundary creation and maintenance migrant women have been rendered as 'female' and as 'foreigner' i.e. "those safe to brutalise" (Gqola, 2021:167). The government's Covid-19 response represents a discursive tactic of boundary maintenance that designates a category of people who are open to brutalisation. This was seen by the government's complete lack of will to protect women (and all those made female), during the pandemic through gender-responsive policies that could address their heightened exposure to GBV, as well as policies that could combat the further socio-economic marginalisation of women as a result of the lockdown. Moreover, the exclusion of those without documentation from Covid-19 related relief, while policing their numerous other rights and freedoms, sends clear messaging of subjection and inferiority.

However, this discursive work of boundary creation and maintenance of the valuation system done by the state is nothing new. The findings revealed how migrant women's inability to access citizenship existed before Covid-19. Participants cited structural violence, institutionalised xenophobia and exclusion as part and parcel of their everyday lives in South Africa prior to the implementation of lockdown. The government's Covid-19 related measures exacerbated these experiences of vulnerability, pushing migrant women even further to the outskirts of citizenship. These findings corroborate Nshimbi (2022)'s recent work that argues that Covid-19

merely amplified the “age-long hierarchisation of human beings”, which have historically classified people into superior/inferior beings” who live respectively in the “zone of being” or “zone of non-being” (Nshimbi, 2022). These hierarchical relations, established with the advent of colonialism and the implementation of racialised and gendered citizenship, continued with the exclusionary policies of apartheid, are “consistently reinforced through persistent coloniality” (Nshimbi, 2022). Migrant women’s exclusion from citizenship - their inability to access basic rights and a sense of belonging - as well as the persistent humiliation and indignity they suffered in grappling for inclusion, demonstrates how they have been relegated to the “zone of non-being”. A zone in which those made ‘female’ and ‘foreigner’ have been forced to fit comfortably. Thus, migrant women, not meeting the standard of citizenship have been systematically excluded, demonstrating the hierarchical and exclusionary functioning of citizenship in South Africa, the *coloniality of citizenship.* Thus, I conclude that the government’s response to Covid-19 reveals its persistent maintenance and assertion of the *coloniality of citizenship* in South Africa.

CHAPTER 6

The hierarchy of humanity: Its maintenance and its rupture

Introduction

This chapter aims to situate my research within the global context, examining the hierarchical functioning of citizenship globally. By illuminating the colonial hierarchization of difference that has situating certain bodies outside of civilization, the exclusionary and violent functioning of citizenship is revealed. Concluding more hopefully, I highlight the opportunity that pandemics present for change, exploring examples of agency and dissent in the research that offer a challenge to the exiting citizenship paradigm in South Africa and which can offer inspiration for rupture globally.

The hierarchical functioning of global citizenship

The hierarchy of humanity, by which those made 'female' and 'foreigner' have been reduced to disposable and ousted to the "zone of non-being" (Nshimbi, 2022), permeates not just citizenship in South Africa, but the global institution of citizenship. Through "the process of active reduction of people", governments have had relative success in turning certain groups of people "into less than human beings" (Lugones, 2010:745). The colonial hierarchization of difference according to racialised, ethnicised and gendered criteria has situated certain bodies outside of civilization, not meeting the "standard of citizenship" (Lugones, 2008:16), normalising, and even justifying, systemic racialized gender violence. At this juncture, where inferiorised identities intersect, the insidiousness of the global institution of citizenship is revealed, highlighting the hierarchical, exclusionary and violent functioning of citizenship, which has rendered the pervasive precarities of migrant women banal.

As a part of my studies, I had the privilege of completing a semester at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, India. During my time in India, what struck me were the many similarities in social systems between India and South Africa. I learned about India's history, plagued by violence and division according to multiple hierarchies (caste, religion, class, ethnicity, and gender), much like South Africa. These two countries' tumultuous, violent pasts have shaped the socioeconomic inequalities and social institutions that exist within them today.

Arriving in India, in March of last year, one thing that I immediately noticed was how few women I saw in public; in the streets, in the shops, on campus. Men seemed to dominate public space. This seemed strange considering the 2019/2020 government National Family and Health Survey found there was a greater population of women than men in India (Ellis-Petersen, 2021). We, a mixed bag of international students, discussed this observation amongst ourselves and questioned our local peers. The answer that emerged was that cities and public spaces were perceived as hostile and dangerous for women. According to a 2019 Thomas Reuters survey of 543 international experts on gender issues, "India was ranked as the most dangerous country in the world for women" (Banerjee, 2020:644). I knew that GBV, as in South Africa, was rife, but was ignorant of the magnitude of gendered violence in India - an issue on which I was quickly educated during my studies. I soon came to understand that the epidemic of GBV in India shared many unfortunate similarities to that which exists in South Africa.

As in South Africa, rape in India is a common occurrence and rapes that make headlines are "a fragment of the total rapes in any one country" (Gqola, 2021:101). This has resulted in an overarching narrative in India "that cities are violent spaces that women are better off not accessing at all" (Phadke, 2013:50). One rape case that came to world attention and galvanised local outrage and protest action was that of twenty-three-year-old, Jyoti Singh, who, on 16 December 2012, was gang-raped by six men on a bus on the way home from seeing a movie. She died thirteen days later in the hospital from her injuries. This case, although more than a decade ago, was commonly referred to in classes and talked about among students as a predominant and outrageous case of GBV in India. According to Gqola (2021:100) "Jyoti Singh's experience drew international media attention, not because rape is a rare occurrence in India, but because of the combination of factors, including the identities and social position of the violators and the perpetrators". Banerjee, (2020:643) concurs, arguing:

> In a cultural context in which sexual and gendered violence is reported daily without much public outcry, these large-scale protests were very unusual and an indicator that Indian citizens are quite aware of the hollowness of legal equality promised them.

The public outcry that followed this attack and similar high-profile rape cases has centred on the issue of women's safety rather than that of "women's right to access public space" and "the discourse of safety is not an inclusive one" (Phadke, 2013:50). Rather subordinate groups are forced to "negotiate contradictions that appear in their daily lives when the legal promise of equality fails to provide any kind of protection" (Banerjee, 2020:643). This case and others where lower class men attack middle and upper class women, another example being the 2013 gang-rape of Shakti Mills, spark outrage and are remembered in the pubic imaginary for years after, but "when lower class, dalit or tribal [Adivasi] women are sexually assaulted the media barely covers these attacks and there is little or no public outrage" (Phadke, 2013:50). The sensationalisation of a few cases of sexual violence misportray these incidences as exceptional rather than as commonplace and suggest that some rapes are "especially shocking and/or brutal", while others are "mild" (Gqola, 2021:105). This framing can be located in Gqola's (2021:17) "unrapeable" concept, which describes a "category of humans constructed and marked as free to rape without consequences". The issue is not, of course, that these few cases provoked outrage and heartbreak, but rather that these emotions are evoked selectively. Where is the outrage when a nineteen-year-old Dalit woman is gang-raped by upper-caste men? Where is the panic when thousands of black women are reported as missing in the U.S. each year? Where is the government's urgency to act when women and girls are murdered every few hours in South African townships?

In their work dealing with migrant workers in India, Arora and Majumder (2021:309) also draw on Arendt (1964), in this case, her concept of the 'banality of evil' to argue that the vulnerability and precarity of migrant workers have been normalised over a period of time so "that the privileged classes in India have become desensitized to these pervasive precarities of the migrant workers as they are considered *banal* and *everyday*". Additionally, Arora and Majumder (2021:309) utilise Butler's (2009:8) concept of "grievability", based on the idea that differential social value and importance have been accorded to different lives, to highlight how while some groups of people (in this case migrant women) may be *apprehended* as living, they are not *recognised* as lives and are thus seen as disposable, while others are seen as needing to be protected. These theories of precarity explain how some rapes, while brutal by definition, can be seen as 'mild' or even 'banal', just as the economic and social

violations of migrant women during Covid-19 by governments around the world were rendered obscure by their perceived banality and under the banner of public health. The hierarchy of human beings maintains this binary of 'being'/ 'non-being' which continuously normalises violence against certain inferiorised and marginalised categories of humanity.

This hierarchy has, since the colonial beginning, formed the core of the institution of citizenship and continues to distribute "unequal and gendered citizenship rights" in its modern form (Boatcă & Roth 2016: 191). This was made clear by government's Covid-19 responses around the world. The lockdown, as Roy (2020:209) put it "worked like a chemical experiment that suddenly illuminated hidden things". This was seen as "the social and economic stress brought by the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing toxic social norms and gender inequality", increasing GBV significantly under global lockdowns (Dlamini, 2021:585). Compounding the increase in gender inequality and violence, was institutionalised racism that further restricted access to citizenship rights for women from already marginalised communities. The pandemic offered governments an excuse to 'justifiably' implement exclusion and to systematically curtail "the movement of certain categories of people", propelling the already-existent "war on mobility", a term used by Mbembe (in Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Moyo, 2022:2) to describe the filtering of bodies for the purpose of determining who is desirable and who must be discarded in order to protect the West. This process followed racialised logic, preferring white migrants from countries like Norway, who were seen as valuable and 'safe', while black migrants (or those belonging to other racial groups) from 'shithole' countries - those in Africa and Latin America - were seen as dangerous carriers of the virus and barred from entry (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Moyo, 2022:3). South Africa, "behaving like Europe", adopted the same racialised response to the pandemic (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Moyo, 2022:3). Much like former President Donald Trump's ambition to build a wall on the border of the United States (U.S.) and Mexico, "South Africa embarked on erecting a fence stretching 40 kilometres along the South Africa-Zimbabwe border - to curb the flow of migrants from neighbouring Zimbabwe" (Nshimbi, 2022:164). Ironically, "the actual direction from which vectors of the coronavirus disease flowed at the time did not include the latter, let alone other African countries". Rather, high-risk countries included the U.S. and countries in Western Europe (Nshimbi, 2022:164). This racialised thinking was

made clear during the pandemic, but it has been seen time and again throughout the globe. A recent example of this, post-lockdown, has been the 2022 "Russian-Ukraine war in which countries neighbouring Ukraine, such as Poland, have refused (grudgingly accepted) Black African migrants across their borders but were welcoming to Ukrainian citizens and other White people fleeing war" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Moyo, 2022:9). Again the hierarchy of humanity rears its head as we see how certain war refugees are viewed as more deserving of protection than others.

Thus, while my research has focused on what the Covid-19 moment revealed about the institution of citizenship in South Africa, it exposes the enduring presence of coloniality in citizenship regimes more broadly and poses a challenge to its continuation. This research challenges the notion that a global citizenship existed prior to the Covid-19 era, or at least that such citizenship has ever been inclusive. It also problematises the argument that it was the pandemic that created a crisis of citizenship. The institution of citizenship is a crisis in and of itself. What the Covid-19 pandemic has done, is shone a light on the injustices of the world, making the hierarchical functioning of the global institution of citizenship undeniably clear.

Agency and alternatives: rupturing the coloniality of citizenship

If we take seriously Roy's (2020:214) argument that Covid-19 can present an opportunity to imagine a better tomorrow, captured in this well circulated quote, it means that we are at a crossroads and there are choices to be made:

> Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcases of our prejudice and hatred… Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

The pandemic has revealed the brutal, structural inequality existent in the world and its cruel protector - the global institution of citizenship. What remains now is no small task, but it is one that is taken up every day from the margins as vulnerable groups struggle for access, challenging the *coloniality of citizenship* in their fight to forge a new inclusive citizenship paradigm.

Migrant women are not just passive victims, merely acted upon and dominated. They attempt to navigate and challenge their experiences of vulnerability through different strategies and displays of agency in their daily fight for access and recognition. In the face of unrelenting exclusion and barriers to citizenship access, moments of dissent challenging the *coloniality of citizenship* were also evident in the research. This dissent was seen by participants' determination and the profound optimism they demonstrated in the face of unrelenting hardships, encouraging them to remain hopeful as well as to find new ways of overcoming challenges. Participants utilised innovative methods of survival in order to navigate their daily challenges, whether through wilful rationing tactics or entrepreneurial spirit, refusing to succumb to the multiple barriers they face. Religion also played a role in the lives of participants, offering "both a network of support and a practice of agency", whereby agency was upheld "through social dimensions of prayer" (Nyamnjoh, Hall & Cirolia, 2022:37). Religious practices helped women to remain hopeful and many participants found comfort and support in their religious community, providing them with a way of coping with their desperate living conditions. These examples of women migrant's agencies, amongst their realities of deprivation, demonstrate the ways in which they navigate their exclusion in an attempt to access elements of citizenship beyond what they are given.

Seeking solidarity and community was another agency tool employed by participants to cope with their exclusion and remain hopeful. Examples of community support and solidarity from different people, across nationalities, races and genders also confront the dominant migrant discourse of difference and exclusion that aim to preserve the *coloniality of citizenship*. Participants emphasised their commonality with poor black South Africans arguing for the need to treat one another as equals and with compassion. Such narratives, recognising a common humanity, begin to offer an alternative citizenship discourse based on inclusion, compassion, equality and cooperation among differences, much more aligned with the Constitution (Act 108, 1996) than the existing one. This conceptualisation of citizenship offers a way forward towards "planetary humanism". According to Majumdar (2022:251):

> The all-inclusive premise of "planetary humanism" considers nation as imaginary and humanity as real. Hence it appeals and campaigns to engage in a struggle for the rights of humanity and resists any form of violation of

> human rights by strategically uniting against it in every nook and corner of the globe.

These examples of solidarity among differences convey what Diagne & Amselle (2020) call “the universal” - a site for solidarity among differences. The universal enables the recognition of “bridges and contingencies between particularized demands and dimensions of universality or interconnectedness”, helping to overcome divisive politics (Walsh, 2002:65). This site of solidarity across nationalities, races and genders offers a collective space where shared experiences of marginalization can transcend constructed colonial differences and where categories of insiders and outsiders can be contested and new collective identities forged out of common experiences of exclusion and shared aim of emancipation. Although these examples of agency and dissent cannot be seen as overcoming the exclusion, structural violence and institutionalised xenophobia experienced by migrant women in South Africa, they provide a glimmer of hope in a desperately unjust system, paving the way towards recreating a new citizenship paradigm in South Africa and offering inspiration for rupture globally.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

By examining the effects of the South African government's Covid-19 response on the experiences of migrant women living in Cape Town, this research has conveyed how the response exposed migrant women to heightened vulnerability and exclusion at a time of pronounced precarity. The findings revealed how participants perceived the government's Covid-19 response as pushing them deeper into poverty and limiting their ability to access their needs. They felt the lockdown put additional burdens on them as women, intensifying their responsibilities as carers and limiting their freedom, while also exposing women to higher chances of abuse. Participants conveyed how the response also heightened their exposure to structural violence by creating additional barriers to documentation and healthcare, furthering socioeconomic marginalisation due to exclusionary government policies. This significantly damaged participants' physical well-being, as well as produced and reinforced feelings of fear and hopelessness, which participants perceived as having lasting implications on their mental health. Participants' exposure to increased vulnerability severely curtailed their ability to access their rights, enshrined in South Africa's Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) including the Bill of Rights, as well as a sense of belonging and inclusion, preventing their attainment of citizenship.

While the government's response to Covid-19 created additional barriers and challenges for migrant women by prioritising an exclusionary migrant discourse and practice, the findings revealed how the response conveys continuity with the existing order in South Africa, rather than change. The government's response did not bring about a substantial shift in access to citizenship but rather worsened it by reinforcing barriers to accessing rights and reasserting participants' nonbelonging in South Africa. Thus, while the government's response to Covid-19 structurally distributed unequal and gendered citizenship rights, the findings suggest that this practice was nothing new. Rather, the marginalisation of those constructed as non-citizens by the government, and thus undeserving of its support and protection during the pandemic, is indicative of the already-existent racialised and gendered citizenship institution in South Africa that classifies 'insider'/'outsider' and 'deserving'/'undeserving'.

Covid-19 merely amplified the pre-existing hierarchisation of human beings, which has historically classified people into the “zone of being” or “zone of non-being” (Nshimbi, 2022). These hierarchical relations, established with the advent of colonialism and the implementation of racialised and gendered citizenship have been consistently reinforced through coloniality. Migrant women’s exclusion from citizenship and the persistent humiliation and indignity they suffer in grappling for inclusion demonstrates how they have been systematically excluded and relegated to the “zone of non-being”. This was seen by participants continuous experiences of structural violence and exclusion, made worse by the absence of state protection and support. Thus, the government’s Covid-19 response reveals its persistent maintenance and assertion of the *coloniality of citizenship* in South Africa.

By exposing the exclusionary and violent functioning of the institution of citizenship in South Africa, this research aims to provoke questioning and challenging of the global institution of citizenship, which according to Boatcă and Roth (2016:191-192) is one of the most decisive factors accounting for extreme inequality. It sheds light on the insidious character of citizenship as a marker of difference and ascription of belonging according to racial, ethnic and gendered criteria, which relegates certain bodies to the margins and normalises systemic racialized gender violence. Exposing the hidden functioning of citizenship - the *coloniality of citizenship* - is an important step towards recreating an alternative citizenship paradigm based on the ideals of planetary humanism, a task already being undertaken by those who know this hidden character of citizenship all too well. In the face of unrelenting exclusion and barriers to citizenship, migrant women displayed immense agency in their struggle to access more than the pittance they are allowed, and in their efforts to forge solidarity and community. These examples of dissent contest constructed categories of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ and offer a site of struggle whereby new collective identities can be forged out of common experiences of exclusion and an alternative citizenship paradigm born.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Research Project:

The effects of the government's covid response on women migrants living in Cape Town:assessing colonial citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa and the potential for a new citizenship paradigm.

Name of Master's student:

Olivia Burton

Department/research group address:

Sociology Department

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Telephone:

0780171259 (Mobile)

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oburton246@gmail.com

Nature of research:

This interview is part of a qualitative research project investigating the effects of the South African government's Covid-19 responsive on migrant women living in Cape Town and its implications on experiences of vulnerability.

Participants' involvement:

What's involved: an in-depth in person interview of approximately 1 hour long that will explore the effects that the government's lockdown laws on migrant women and the implications of the covid response on experiences of xenophobia and structural violence and exclusion.

Agreement

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read the consent form and the information it contains and have had the opportunity to ask questions about it.
- I agree to my responses being used for research on the condition that my privacy is respected, subject to the following:I understand that my answering in the interview might be included in the Honours thesis and that I can choose not to be personally identifiable.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this interview.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this interview at any stage.

Name of Participant:

Contact details of participant:

Signature of Honours student:

Date:

Appendix B: Example of Verbatim Transcription (Participant J)

I: Okay and what documentation do you have currently?

P: I have asylum seeker. Since 2009 they promised us that the officer will come and listen to us status, but they never come, and always we must just renew the papers. They never come and still today we are waiting. I only have my permit and after six months we have to go and renew it and now that's it's online it's one year.

I: And how do you find the online process?

P: I mean its good because I applied to renew my papers and three or four weeks I get it.

I: Okay, but you never received asylum status, just the permits for all these years?

P: Yes, they never come.

I: Okay, and before you got the asylum permit, when you first came in 2006 did you have any documentation or were you living here undocumented?

P: No, I never want to be without a document. When I first came here they gave me a month's stay and then I explain myself and they give me the paper. And the officer was then supposed to come to us again and decide to give us status or whatever. They never came since then, Since 2009.

I: Okay and when lockdown was first implemented, what were some of the main challenges you experienced?

P: It was not easy because we are supposed to work usually to deal with the expenses and everything. It was not easy because we are supposed to be in charge of ourselves, but we are not working and we didn't receive anything from anyone. If you are asylum you have it make your own plan. It was like that; we had to make our own plan.

Appendix C: Example of Electronic Journal

First-Level Codes

1. Further impoverishment due to lockdown:

- Loss of Jobs
- Inability to access basic needs
- Exclusion from
- Lack of support

Quotes from interviews:

"I was working we get some money, so we have to use all those things and the small money. I was saving to buy the food for the kids and to pay for the house as well because by that time even the landlord of the house was saying you have to pay rent for the house. So what are you doing? You are not working, but you have to pay the house. So we use all that to pay the house and to eat" (Participant A).

"… is was only with South Africans, it was only them who was getting that parcel food and the money as well. So I didn't get anything…" (Participant A).

"I came here to help him (her husband) *to support him with the family and also to get something to so to send back home because there's family back home. And before since was right, but then COVID hurt the business and since then everything has been slowly and nothing looks the same like before"* (Participant C when asked what she expected her life would be like before arriving in South Africa).

"Yoh it was not easy, no business, we're just at home. Maybe some month we don't even have money to pay rent" (Participant D).

"Yoh it was difficult because no food, no work, only stay in the house, so we don't find anything to eat because we're not working" (Participant E).

"because there's not work, even the people that was working they get such a little money. So there was no food, maybe if you're eating in the morning then the next time you eat is at night, because you have to save food for the next day" (Participant F when asked about how the lockdown affected people's access to their basic rights).

2. Damage to Mental Health:

- Increased hopelessness due to loss of income and social isolation

- Uncertainty and fear around how long Lockdown will continue and how they will support their children as well as themselves.

Quotes:

"Yeah we were sacred. Yoh, we don't know what will happen. Maybe could be weeks and we have no food" (Participant D when asked how the lockdown measures affected her mental health).

"Like my experience, there is no hope for now because there's no jobs. And it's very difficult because only one person in my family is working so it's very difficult… Yeah it affected us because we go down. There is no hope again and that time we loose hope because we don't know when this covid thing will be over. So there is no hope" (Participant D).

Yes I feel, because we just have to stay in the house, we don' have a choice to go and play outside. Only stay in the house the whole day (Participant I).

"yeah, covid was making us think there was no hope" (Participant J).

"… mentally we were so much disturbed. Sometimes we would feel like: "are we still in our right senses? How can we be locked in a country?" Sometimes I felt like I was being squashed. I could not go anywhere… So for me, at one point I felt so much squashed. So I felt my mental senses have been squeezed and squashed" (Participant K).