# CHAPTER 9
# Intra-African Migration Impact on Family Structure and Career: A Self-Study Inquiry from a Female Migrant in Southern Africa

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## Abstract
According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Intra-African mobility doubled, from 13.3 million to 25.4 million between 2008 and 2017. Intra-African mobility, despite its complexities, is often seen as a network linking economically poor Sub-Saharan countries to more developed African states, with the aim of uplifting families economically. This qualitative phenomenological study employs narrative inquiry to reflect upon and analyse the experiences of individuals because of Intra-African migration. The self-study offers insights into the nature of opportunities, assumptions and realities experienced by a female from East Africa within a family space in Botswana and South Africa. The study illuminates how these experiences impact the identity, family structure, and transformation of women migrants. Fore-grounded on the narrator's voice, in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, the reader can envisage an unrehearsed female migrant who struggled with contextual variations in Botswana. The lack of an established support system affected her mental health and agency despite working as a teacher and her spouse having a well-paying job and remittance back home. The social and institutional structures did not favour progression; thus, the family moved to South Africa for career advancement and hospitality. Although she enjoyed excellent tertiary education opportunities in South Africa, finding steady employment in the host country has remained daunting. This chapter contributes to an emergent body of research that explores the feminisation of Intra-African migration.

**Keywords:** Intra-African migration, female, family structure, career, self-study inquiry, Southern Africa.

# 1 Introduction

In the 1980s, the international exodus of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) migrants to Europe led to the perception that Africa was the 'continent on the move' (Flahaux & de Haas 2016). However, aligned with international trends at continent levels, SSA has the second largest share of intra-regional migration globally. By 2020, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) indicated that 63% of migrants from SSA were living in other parts of Africa (UNDESA 2020:2). This reality contradicts previous data analysis reports or media stereotypes which argue that the rapid movement of Africans to the developed countries is driven by poverty and conflicts. Although we cannot ignore African migration to Europe triggered by violent conflicts, poverty or environmental degradation via the Mediterranean Sea, a wave of young skilled professionals and entrepreneurs dominates the recent Intra-African migration trends (Mlambo & Mpanza 2019). In the 1990s, young professionals moved from other SSA countries to Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, Botswana, South Africa, and Zambia (IOM 2019b). These African elites (including myself) from poorer nations moved to these countries with high expectations of political freedom, economic benefits, better livelihoods and social integration (Mberu & Sidze 2017; Udelsmann & Bjarnesen 2020). Despite the complexity related to the trends and driving forces, this Intra-African movement has created Diasporan communities, which impact the country of origin and host countries in various ways. For instance, the Intra-African remittances from South Africa alone had an outflow of EUR 934 million to their neighbouring countries in 2018 (UNDESA 2019).

International organisations generate most existing quantitative data about Intra-African migration outside the continent to explore global and regional migration patterns within the umbrella of neoliberal policies. It means the African migration phenomenon may lack an accurate theoretical underpinning that looks at migrants from a family perspective (Flahaux & de Haas 2016; Achieng, El Fadil & Righa 2020). In this chapter, the African women migrants' voice is elevated. It illuminates how personal experiences in the destination countries impact the self-identity, family structure, career and transformation of women migrants. Recent surveys and interview-based studies on Southern African migration show the movement's complexities, contradicting or exaggerating the previous data (Flahaux & de Haas 2016). For instance, one report argues that female migrants are highest in Eastern Africa (50%), followed by Central and Western Africa (47% each), Southern Africa

(44%) and Northern Africa (43%) (UNCTAD 2018). However, a simple Google Scholar search on African women migration in Southern Africa between 2018 and 2022 generates over 20 small interview-based studies of Zimbabwean female teachers, domestic workers, sex workers, women traders, refugees and children experiences in South Africa (Anganoo & Manik 2019; Dodson 2018; Liu 2020). In these studies, the women's voices are relegated to the periphery. There is limited research focusing on professional women migrants, who are an essential component of labour markets and the globalisation process in the context of South-South migration flows. There is a need for an accumulative scholarship to critically interrogate and validate the existing data regarding professional Intra-African migrant women (Muthuki 2013). Self-studies or in-depth data highlighting how migration impacts gender roles, family structures and career advancement in the host countries are unavailable. Against this backdrop, this chapter explores the assumptions and realities of a female teacher migrant. It describes how the migration impacted her family relationships and career in the host countries. Future robust phenomenological studies or multiple narratives together with practical interventions would illuminate the needs, opportunities and challenges of African women migrants. The scholarship may assist in the transformation of Intra-African migration policies.

In this chapter, the author conceptualises and offers a brief history of Intra-African migration following this introduction section. Literature on Intra-African migration and women's perspective in Southern Africa will then be presented, proceeded by the theoretical framework and methodology sections. Using a narrative inquiry approach, the author generates a sequential vignette and description of the lived experiences in Botswana and South Africa.

## 1.1 Objectives and Research Questions

The objectives of the chapter are to:

- Examine the expectations and assumptions made by Intra-African women migrants regarding the country of destination.
- Investigate Intra-African migration's impact on the family structure and career opportunities for women in the destination country.

With the incorporation of a gender perspective, in this chapter, the author aims to answer two related questions:

- What are the expectations and assumptions made by Intra-African women migrants regarding the country of destination?

- How does Intra-African migration impact women's family structure and career opportunities in the destination country?

## 2 Insights into Intra-Africa Migration

The Intra-African migration can be traced over 2000 years ago during the Bantu expansion and northward migration. According to Lucas (2015), pre-colonial Intra-African migration was an essential strategy for livelihoods. The pastoral communities moved seasonally in search of water and pastures (Massai of Kenya and Tanzania or Tuareg of West Africa); barter traders among Timbuktu; transatlantic trade and the ruin of Great Zimbabwe also support this notion. Other communities moved in response to environmental distress or the expansion of stronger tribes. These early movements affected various communities' population density or social structures (Achieng *et al.* 2020). Later, Africans were forced to move within the colonial territorial borders (Udelsmann & Bjarnesen 2020). Most of these political boundaries remain a source of internal and regional conflicts in contemporary Africa. Nevertheless, these conflicts have also created new possibilities - a move towards economic collaboration and integration (Mlambo & Mpanza 2019).

Although Intra-African migration is an old phenomenon, there is no single specific definition of the term. At regional levels, Intra-African migration is often substituted with terms like transnational, international mobility, or intercontinental migration. Adopted from UNDESA (1998) in paragraph 32, a migrant is 'any person who has moved across an international border away from their habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) their legal status; (2) whether their move was voluntary or involuntary; (3) the driving forces; (4) or period of stay in the host country' (IOM 2019a:32). Therefore, this chapter considers Intra-African migration as the movement of any person across national borders within Africa regardless of the driving circumstances, form, or legality. The study also perceives Intra-African sometimes as a 'two-step' migration by skilled workers in search of better socio-economic opportunities. Thus, migration can lead to permanent or temporary settlement in the host county.

Intra-African migration is shaped by three main regional movements: labour migration in the western and central areas, refugees movement in the

eastern and southern areas, together with professional (skilled) migration mostly from West and East Africa to Southern Africa (Mberu & Sidze 2017; Udelsmann & Bjarnesen 2020). The African Union (AU), in conjunction with international organisations, has examined African migration trends and amended policies in the last decade to increase free movement aligned to Agenda 2063, strengthened intra- and interregional cooperation and resolve the Africa-Europe migration crisis (Mlambo & Mpanza 2019). For instance, in conjunction with IOM, the AU revised the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) in 2017 and 2018. It has also developed a 10-year plan to achieve stronger African migration frameworks by 2030. This development resonates with the Economic Development in Africa Report (UNDESA 2020), which stresses the benefits of Intra-African migration to the origin and destination countries, the African alliance, and social-economic transformation. Intra-African migration contributes to gross domestic product, employment, trade, poverty reduction and inclusive growth in Africa. Similarly, it allows highly skilled youth to share their knowledge. According to cited interview with Aissata Kane in September 2020, 'African students were moving to countries with well-developed universities on the continent …. that could facilitate skill development and job creations for the youths' (Udelsmann & Bjarnesen 2020: 30).

African states, therefore, need to strengthen the existing policies while creating their national and regional migration policies within the AU policy guiding principles. Nevertheless, Africa seems to have limited resources and capacities to create, implement and monitor migration frameworks at the national or regional level (Achieng *et al.* 2020). Despite these challenges, progress has been made toward easing travel document requirements. In the East African Community (EAC), people freely travel within the region using valid national passports or the new East African passport, which accords a six months multiple-entry validity. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has also linked up with the EAC to examine this free movement's positive and negative impact. Dr Linda Adhiambo Oucho, in response to an interview on this free movement, noted that 'increased free movement in Africa is expected to decrease the numbers of irregular immigrants, [but] may open more possibilities for trafficking' (Udelsmann & Bjarnesen 2020:30). Similarly, in the West African region, ECOWAS migrants are issued with an ordinary passport for travel within the region for up to 90 days without a visa. Although the Southern African Development Community

(SADC) visa exemption protocols and action plans on travel, tourism, and free movement are in place, there is still an entry visa policy in Angola, DRC and Madagascar. The 13 other states must complete the bilateral agreements to restrict illegal migration. There is also ongoing discussion to harmonise and amend current migration policies and introduce a SADC passport. To promote free movement and collective integration, Botswana and Namibia signed a bilateral memorandum of understanding on 20 February 2023 for citizens to use identity cards for travel and abolish passports (Botswana Home Affairs, Press Release 20 February 2023). Similarly, the bilateral agreement between Kenya and South Africa signed in 2022 allows Kenyans to travel visa-free to South Africa from January 2023 for up to 90 days.

Despite these significant strides, the implementation of these progressive policies remains problematic. Resources are insufficient to accommodate the influx of migrants from poor to middle-income countries, and undocumented immigrants can be a risk to South African authority and safety (Mlambo & Mpanza 2019:283). For this reason, in 2022, the South African Department of Home Affairs (DHA) announced the termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits (ZEP) from June 2023. This action aims to drive away over 178,000 ZEP holders who have lived and worked in South Africa for over two decades if they do not apply for regular South African permits. Lesotho migrants with similar permits have been informed by DHA that their services are no longer needed in South Africa. Civil society organisations interpret these actions as violations of human rights. Research also shows that most illegal immigrants in SA sustain the livelihoods of their relatives in their country of origin (Zimbabwe); hence, strict action against them reduces economic benefits to their people (UNDESA 2019).

The drivers of migration within Southern Africa are largely linked to geographical proximity and economic gains of both the host and country of origin. For example, for a long time, the South African industrial, mining industry and agriculture sectors have drawn cheap labour from the neighbouring countries since the 1960s and 1970s (Hlalele & Mashiya 2019; Mberu & Sidze 2017). In contrast, people from South Africa moved to Angola, Namibia, Zambia and other neighbouring countries during civil wars or apartheid tensions (IOM 2019b; Edelman & Bjarnesen 2020). Botswana's diamond discovery and Angola's oil wealth attracted skilled and unskilled labour migrants from the region and elsewhere in the 1980s and 1990s (Mlambo & Mpanza 2019). Botswana nationals can travel to South Africa for highly skilled jobs, business,

medical care, family visits, holidays, and shopping (Crush & Peberdy 2018). Recently, Botswana has been elevated to middle-income and migrant-receiving country status drawing skilled professionals across the continent.

At the end of the Apartheid regime in South Africa in 1994, new job opportunities were created, attracting unskilled workers from poor SADC member countries. Similarly, professionals from Asia, Europe, and the rest of Africa were attracted by better economic growth, the new political climate, and attractive salaries (Flahaux & De Haas 2016; Udelsmann & Bjarnesen 2020). However, the South African authority only recognises migrants considered valuable and forces the majority of others who qualify to apply for asylum status (Moyo, Nshimbi & Gumbo 2018). South Africa has witnessed a growing number of undocumented immigrants from various regions, such as the SADC region, the rest of Africa, Europe, the USA, and Asia (Crush & Peberdy 2018). Consequently, it ranks among the countries with the highest migrant populations, with approximately 6% of its population being migrants, trailing behind Gabon (16%), Libya (12%), Côte-d'Ivoire (10%), and Gambia (10%) (Crush & Peberdy 2018).

## 3 Intra-African Women Migrants in Southern African

Although the number of male migrants exceeds that of female migrants, there is an emerging pattern of increased female migration in Southern Africa since 2015. Increasingly, feminisation within Africa is linked to personal advancements in education and employment, the elimination of legal restrictions and changing standards in Sub-Saharan Africa (Magidimisha 2018). It is also linked to a decrease in male-dominated families, the emergence of more female-headed households and a global increase in professional (skilled) migration (UNCTAD 2018). However, there are limited cumulative studies on professsional or independent women migrants in Southern Africa. A simple search generates several case studies of independent women migrants in South Africa in the last eight years (Hlalele & Mashiya 2019; Masanja 2012; Muthuki 2013). Most studies highlight the challenges and experiences of semi-skilled and unskilled women migrants from Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe involved in cross-border trade, contract agricultural or domestic employment in South Africa (Moyo 2017). Most studies on women migrants from Sub-Saharan countries to South Africa relate to refugee issues, asylum seekers and experiences of the Somali, Ethiopian, Congolese, Senegalese and Rwandan

women migrants (Magidimisha 2018; Xulu-Gama 2022).

From the African family perceptive, men are the primary economic migrants, and the women either join the spouses later or are left behind (Hlalele & Mashiya 2019). Most women who opt to join their spouses become homemakers or engage in small businesses to supplement their spouses' income in Diaspora (Netshikulwe, Nyamnjoh & Garba 2022). However, women forced by circumstances to remain in their home countries tend to gain more authority and work harder to maintain their homes within the patriarch norms (Magidimisha 2018; Hlalele & Mashiya 2019). For instance, during the Angolan civil war, women had to take on greater family responsibilities like trade, construction, home maintenance, disciplining male children, dealing with legal issues, and fulfilling social obligations, initially perceived as men's tasks (UNCTAD 2018). In matrimonial circles, women's self-sufficiency is discouraged; thus, peers, extended family, and religion will pressure women to join their spouses. According to Hiralal (2017), citing Cohen in 1997, the married women in Southern Africa also migrated, but their narratives were concealed.

Women are supposed to be passive in making family decisions and live a systematic gendered, socially constructed life supporting families, toiling and struggling. Nevertheless, women seek more freedom to work and achieve their full potential. For instance, young married Ethiopian women in South Africa would like to move 'away from the Spaza shop mentality' (Netshikulwe *et al.* 2022:84). Due to these tensions, gender studies have shifted away from women as supporters of men to professional women who autonomously migrate within the labour market narratives - a trend in the feminisation of migration (Muthuki 2013).

There is adequate evidence suggesting that independent Intra-African female migration has become prevalent. Most of these women are active economic contributors as professionals, activists and heads of households (Magidimisha 2018). Responding to social and economic models, many Sub-Saharan women migrants perceived South Africa as a nation with a relatively peaceful and economically stable environment. On arrival, this perception changed as they experienced intimidating situations and xenophobic attacks (Hiralal 2019). For example, Zimbabwean female teachers are the largest group in South Africa. Despite the principles of African integration and their educational qualifications, most are working as unskilled workers for survival (ibid). They are either students or working as part-time tutors, day-care helpers, volunteers, housekeepers or vendors. With time, their reality to engage in more

formal jobs diminishes (Magidimisha 2018). Women migrants with no professional status, work as seasonal or illegal wage workers in the service industry. This reality requires a constant redefinition of the self as a woman, her family role(s), and her professional status. Women migrants, therefore, change their roles and occupation in destination countries due to discriminating labour policies, marital status, environmental variations or socio-political tensions (Okyere-Darko and Tetteh 2016).

Globally, despite the challenges, female migrants contribute financially to family maintenance or as long-distance mothers or extended family back home (Baldassar, Kilkey, Merla & Wilding 2018). Women migrants constantly keep negotiating conflicting ideologies such as race, gender, nationality, culture, and class to improve their lives in the host countries despite being on the periphery (Akosah-Twumasi *et al.* 2020; Colomers 2019). They struggle to adjust to various structural inequalities and shift multiple contexts as demanded in the host countries hoping to be assimilated or to transform themselves. This chapter offers valuable insights into the experiences of Intra-African women migrants in Southern Africa, contributing to the existing body of knowledge in this field. Furthermore, the shared experiences shed light on migration policies and can inform the development of intervention programs to support African women migrants.

## 4 Methodology

Generally, an experiential-phenomenological study uses qualitative methods that allow a stepping-back approach, critical interrogation of enactments and analysis of the phenomenon within the broader social-economic, historical or political contexts (Pithouse 2009). This phenomenological qualitative chapter uses a self-study design within a narrative voice to account for the author's lived experiences as an Intra-African woman migrant. Self-study research seems to be the least used method in the migration field. Moreover, as discourse analysis, self-studies facilitate understanding the self and identities shift over time in different contexts (Georgakopoulou 2013). Last, a self-narrative approach creates an emotionally and academically intriguing scholarly critique.

During the writing process of this narrative, I (the Narrator) kept a reflective diary as an informal, secure space describing experiences and informal conversations with friends, colleagues, and family members who played a part in my life. The diary generated an analytical memo within the

broader theoretical lens and transformed my thoughts into creative writing. This approach resonates with Pithouse (2007), who claims that there is no self-study without involving others. The 'self' should be understood with 'others' contributions. Reviewing my lived experiences and those of others generates a snapshot of how Intra-African migration impacts the self-identity, family structure, character, growth, shifts in gender roles, and career development from women's perceptive. However, my position may have influenced crafting the vignette, so the occurrences and events cannot be generalised to another self-study research. Thus, the vignette approach acknowledges lived experiences as dynamic, capturing the social-spatial orientation, subjective and fluid in nature (Georgakopoulou 2013).

## 5 The Theoretical Framework of the Study

This chapter is rooted in the conceptual frameworks of social construct and transnationalism, which provide a solid foundation for exploring the lived experiences of an Intra-African migrant woman in Southern Africa during a specific period. The chosen theoretical underpinning is apt and effectively connects with the narrative design employed in the study.

The concept of a social construct carries a socio-cultural meaning which stems from Lee's theory (Lee 1966). According to this theory, the primary drivers of migration are based on 'perceptions' after one evaluates the push factors in the place of origin and the pull factors (advantages) in the destination. Social constructs generally assume that people from less-developed economies migrate to more developed countries due to low salaries, lack of work-life balance, poor living standards, political or social suppression, and poor service provisions (Mlambo & Mpanaza 2019). Moreover, professional and personal satisfaction, higher living standards and salaries, and limited political or cultural control are a magnet to new domains (ibid). This study focuses on one woman migrant from East Africa to the more economically developed Southern Africa. Before the movement, most migrants over-evaluate their destination country, ignoring the possible challenges (Lee 1966). In this context, the social constructs of negative emotions, changes in gender roles, identities, and enactments in Southern Africa illuminate contradictory discourses attached to Intra-African migration. This means migrants do not fully comprehend the destination country before the migration and over-evaluate the economic benefits of the host countries. This assumption underpins the narra-

tive in this chapter. The social constructs within the feminist approach assume that women migrants also appreciate international spaces for family advancement and self-empowerment despite the prejudices (Okyere-Darko & Tetteh 2016).

The conceptual understanding of transnationalism focuses on various ways women migrants survive in socially constructed inequities in the host countries. Transnationalism refers to the process by which migrants build, maintain, and strengthen various connections with their country of origin and the international context (Baldassar *et al.* 2018). Most literature using transnationalism theory explores the implications of migrants from poor countries living in developed countries, their relationships with their countries of origin, and their satisfaction in the destination contexts. Some migrants move between countries crossing different cultures or systems but hold on to the collectiveness of family welfare and unity (ibid). In this case, the female migrant made a 'two-step' migration, first to Botswana and then to South Africa (current destination), while maintaining links with her country of origin.

## 6 How Intra-African Migration Impacts Family Structure and Career

This section provides my vignette as a female Intra-African migrant following three strands of information. First, the section offers reasons for leaving my homeland, followed by lived experiences in Botswana and South Africa as host countries.

| **Migration strategies** | **Country and year** | **Roles/ responsibilities** |
|---|---|---|
| Step one: First migration | Kenya - Botswana: 2001-2012 | Cultural shock and social prejudices, migrant teacher, wife, motherhood. |
| Step two: Second migration: | Botswana-South Africa: 2013-2016 | Socio-cultural disconnect, migrant identity, autonomy, PhD student; motherhood. |
| Life in South Africa | South Africa: 2017-2022 | Role's shift, family head, post-doctorate, permanent resident, unemployed Doctorate, brain gain/ waste? |

## *6.1 Why Did I Leave Kenya in Early 2000?*

My desire in this chapter is to recreate a picture of a female in an African setting who was encouraged from a tender age to pursue a degree in education so that one day she may become *Mwalimu wa Walimu* – loosely translated as 'teacher of teachers; a lecturer. Based on socio-cultural expectations at that time, my humble family resisted cultural practices such as ignorance, female genital mutilation, poverty, inequality, and patriarchal ideologies, a norm in my village, Eastern Kenya. So, excelling in school and leaving the village life was my desire. I completed my A-level studies in 1988 and enrolled at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, during President Moi's reign. In those days, with a bachelor's degree, one was assured of a permanent job and better living standards in urban areas.

President Moi rose to power when the Kenyan economy began to stagnate in the early 1980s after the death of the first president Jomo Kenyatta. He soon faced increasing opposition from different groups and an attempted military coup. In this context, Moi oversaw an authoritarian regime and depended on a network of loyal supporters. His critics and young graduates described this regime as a centralised and ethnically biased state which Kenyans still grapple with today. These negative antidotes affected the social economy and political arenas. Many young university graduates – including my spouse – migrated to Southern Africa, searching for better-paying jobs to support nuclear and extended families. As a young high school teacher, I had enrolled for a part-time master's degree, so the idea was perfect, and I anticipated that my dream to become a lecturer was in the pipeline. My spouse left Kenya for Botswana, and I followed him after one year.

## *6.2 Life in Botswana: Cultural Shock and Social Prejudice*

I joined my spouse, who had been offered a contract job in Botswana, with my two young girls, aged nine and six. The salary and economic benefits were attractive to any Kenyan graduate struggling to feed the nuclear family and support the extended families back home. As an experienced graduate teacher with a master's degree in education, I assumed that getting a job and integrating with the local people was automatic.

First, I did not realise that getting a job as a migrant was determined by labour policies in Botswana, and the teacher's recruiting body no longer employed foreign teachers in public schools. Foreign teachers would only get

an offer of a two-year contract in private schools after 2005. The government stopped renewing contracts to absorb unemployed local teachers with similar teaching skills. Globally this is politically correct and within the migration policies, but most migrants (including myself) do not have adequate knowledge of labour migration policies. This situation was a devasting reality, and I could not envision how to improve my career or convert to becoming a homemaker. Secondly, a social-cultural disconnect and limited integration were perceived, and the question for migrants who move to better economic backgrounds, such as in Botswana, was a logical move. As a family, we settled in a small town called Mochudi in Kgatleng District,10 km from Gaborone, the capital city, and my spouse was the breadwinner who supported the extended family back in Kenya. It was the first time in my life that I experienced a culture shock. I remember writing a letter to my close colleague in Kenya venting about my new context:

> *Botswana has a population of 1.2 million and has more elephants than human beings in a vast countryside. I stay at home the whole day while my spouse and children go to school and sometimes no person passes on the estate road. The way people dress is different from Kenya with causal short skirts/short and transparent tops during summer seasons …!*

Anxiety and frustration became my daily emotions. My familiar symbols of a typical day for a teacher and mother vanished. Social interaction was limited to my two young children and my spouse. There were no recreation facilities, so most weekends, we would drive to the city to shop or meet other Diasporan families. This situation was disheartening and required learning the 'new' and unlearning my homeland experiences. I felt 'brain' wasted, bored and confused. In the spirit of resilience, I enrolled for computer classes in the evenings at a vocational institution while nursing my third child during the day.

After three years of being jobless, I secured a contract job at a private school in Gaborone. The significant social differences inspired us to relocate from Mochudi (a town) to Gaborone (a city) to enable my children to enrol in a better-resourced school near my place of work. My spouse became a commuter which was fine within the family setup. However, the cultural shock as migrant teachers became more pronounced because in our home country, the school community valued discipline, accountability, teamwork, and teachers'

authority, which to a lesser extent, existed in the Botswana context. While working as a student and then a teacher in Kenya, social values such as hard work, resilience, modesty, and self-motivation were deeply embedded in schools. However, this was not the case in Botswana schools. It was a challenge to adapt to students' freedom, carefree attitude, and way of dressing, especially during the hot summers. Luckily, most students, predominantly foreigners with diverse backgrounds, 'perceived' foreign teachers as more hard-working than the local teachers. While we followed the Cambridge education system and the staff enjoyed fee subsidies for their children, I encountered difficulties due to a prevalent belief that 'schools back home were superior'. These stereotypes influenced my perceptions and judgments of the education system and its students. Additionally, I encountered undisciplined and disrespectful behaviour from certain students towards new foreign teachers.

In the community, though the Batswana people are humble, they gave every black migrant the pejorative label of *Mukwerekwere,* loosely translated as 'alien' or 'foreigner' who were up for mischief (Crush & Peberdy 2018:2). The semi and unskilled workers from Zimbabwe who provided cheap labour in the city were perceived as thieves and poor. Likewise, the foreigners stereotyped the local people as lazy and dependent on the rich government. Several times, I would reflect on the USA context, where the word 'black' or 'Negro' refers to the 'African American'. These substitutions are often perceived as less offensive in other parts of the world. They do not understand the discriminatory meanings behind such utterances, which are socially inappropriate and prejudiced toward foreigners. I resented the negativity and disguised the social behaviour in the community. It was difficult to reconcile the two stereotypes, structure systems and employment policies in a peaceful country with a small population, safe environment, good services and higher salaries.

## *6.3 Family Life: A Spouse and Mother in Botswana*

After moving to Botswana, what I experienced, changed my perception and assumptions about family life as a career woman. I struggled as a mother of two young daughters, nursing my son while at the same time job hunting. I realised that getting a job as a teacher was a roller coaster in a foreign country. The pressure was just so much; dealing with postnatal depression, being overwhelmed with housework, stress and insomnia while trying to be a good spouse and a present mother – all without the support system of my extended

family. To exacerbate matters, within the context of patriarchal privileges, beliefs, and practices, my spouse had a demanding job that did not allow him to contribute to household chores.

The attitude and lamentations of my house helper were astonishing. For instance, she would not understand why foreigners came to Botswana and secured professional jobs while the local youth were jobless. On my side, I resented labour laws protecting unskilled workers, like working 8 hours a day and standardised salaries. I used to underestimate the importance of domestic workers in easing the workload that motherhood presents in patriarchal homes – 'they were angels in Kenya'. As a mother in a foreign land, I had to cope with three young children, mostly with an absent spouse. After struggling emotionally for three years, I started thinking of relocating back to Kenya to seek support from my family and friends and get a teaching job. It is difficult for women who leave everything they value behind to follow their spouses in relocating to a new environment. I needed and craved emotional support, unconditional love, and kindness.

## *6.4 Life in South Africa: Socio-Cultural Disconnect and Migrant Identity*

There is a deep-seated hatred and hostility from the local black South Africans towards the migrants from African countries to the present day. The hostility is characterised by periodic xenophobic verbal abuse and physical attacks, regardless of having or not having visa documents (Moyo *et al.* 2018). As a result, most female migrants lead an isolated life characterised by low self-esteem, negative emotions or depression. In this context, I realised humility and playing down my identity was essential. The implication was that if I had been born in South Africa, where black people had been discriminated against for more than a century, my achievements might not have happened, and I, too, would have had similar hostilities towards foreigners. This new realisation changed my perception of the local black community. It reduced my biases, and I stopped using my Kenyan background to judge people. I started seeing them for who they are (positive), disengaged the 'leading feeling', and allowed myself to identify with humanity.

Every black foreigner carries the pejorative label of *Mukwerekwere,* just like in Botswana. Socially and economically, my family felt excluded without a Permanent Residence permit. According to the policies, foreign

students from other regions paid university fees in US dollars – this information is blurred among foreigners. At one point, we had to sell a family house to pay university fees! I was unaware that South Africa has one of the highest violent crime rates in the world, characterised by murder, rape, domestic violence, racism and xenophobia attacks, mass protests, and looting (Crush & Peberdy 2018; Moyo 2017). Metaphors used by the media on how local gang members hijack derelict buildings in the old CBD of cities like Johannesburg or Durban were scary. They collected rent from foreign workers from Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe who could not afford self-contained houses and traumatised them.

Teaching jobs were not available for foreigners in the public sector. Due to historical factors, most private schools were managed along racial lines, with 95% being white teachers. To survive in this big African economy, I enrolled for my PhD in education, and my spouse again became the family's breadwinner. I was positive that our lives were heading in the right direction despite having some medical conditions. When my spouse's job contract ended, he relocated to Kenya, changing my trajectory in South Africa. While studying, I became the head of the family and breadwinner of three children.

## *6.5 Life as a PhD Student, Part-Time Tutor and a Mother*

This period was one of the hardest times of my life. I was abandoned and depressed and wondered why I had left Botswana. However, after completing my PhD, I assumed that becoming a lecturer would be automatic. That gave me the resilience to set my eyes on the prize no matter the challenges. As a full-time PhD student, the University offered teaching opportunities periodically, which was valuable financial support.

I first met Prof Carol Bertram in mid-2012, and our friendship thrived when she became my PhD supervisor, mentor, and role model. Having come from a rote learning background, Professor Bertram significantly impacted my academic journey. She shared her expertise, teaching me critical thinking and academic writing skills that have left a lasting impression. Attending conferences and showcasing my progressive work was a privilege granted to me. The comprehensive training and mentorship I received during this time provided a solid foundation for my post-doctoral fellowship in the faculty of education at Witwatersrand University in 2017.

Despite meeting another inspiring academic scholar, my post-doctoral

fellowship was characterised by family challenges, delays in my permanent residence permit, and medical issues leading to my resignation after my one-year contract. I joined the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) for another post-doctoral year in 2018-19 and secured permanent residence permits for the family. While I appreciated my postdocs, I found myself in a marginal situation - writing and publishing two academic papers in 'reputable' journals were an impossible mission within a given year. I continued to work 'with' the University as a part-time lecturer and teacher-mentor and engaged in research projects until funding was cut off during the Covid-19 breakout. Due to South African equity laws, my desire to become a full-time lecturer has not been realised.

I take pride in my accomplishments as both a mother and an individual who has experienced personal growth while holding a PhD, despite coming from a conservative background and facing prejudices. Furthermore, my two adult children are actively contributing to the economic development of our society. I support my extended family financially whenever needed, demonstrating my commitment to their well-being. Additionally, brewing and enjoying a cup of 'Chai' tea serves as a way for me to reconnect with my heritage and find solace during moments of overwhelming thoughts or work. I believe that sharing these experiences can inspire and empower millions of women in the Diaspora to reflect on their own journeys and reconstruct their own narratives.

## 7 Key Issues Arising from the Narrative

This chapter examines and highlights the assumptions and expectations of an Intra-African female migrant in Southern Africa and how the migration impacted her family structure and career. The narrator is a PhD holder in education who intentionally takes a subjective position avoiding the details of the lived life. The vignette offers her realities in Southern Africa after voluntarily resigning as a graduate teacher in her homeland to join her spouse for a better life and career development in 2001. The story reveals that the narrator did not know the constraining social spaces and restrictive laws in destination countries before migration. She aspired to a high-paying job to support the nuclear family, empower the self, and uplift the extended family. However, after three years as a homemaker in Botswana, she secured a teaching position in Gaborone between 2004 – 2012 for a meagre salary despite having a master's degree in education. Several studies affirm that women migrants

from developing countries to developed nations have limited knowledge and high expectations, affecting their lives (Okeke-Ihejirika *et al.* 2019).

The chapter illuminates the challenges, prejudices and decision-making professional Diaspora women face as they pursue family dreams and careers. The description also highlights the motivations and education opportunities she and her family achieved at one of the reputable universities in South Africa. Despite the career development, the spouse's return to their homeland in 2016 changed her roles to an independent single parent, family provider, and a 'redundant' PhD holder in South Africa. The female migrant assumptions of the two host countries and her realities are inconsistent. The contradictions affected her socialisation, emotions, career, and family structure and changed her perception. Similar stories have been offered by Brazilian women who moved to Italy to repay family debts and support the family (Baldaassar *et al.* 2018).

On the one hand, the realities of most Diasporas denote their quest for agency, high aspirations and challenges. On the other hand, the migrants appreciate higher salaries, better living standards, remittance and educational advancements in rich economic countries (Okyere-Darko & Tetteh 2016). The narrator struggles to secure steady employment or negotiate several socio-cultural and structural inequalities, discriminatory laws, and xenophobia in Sothern Africa. So, her journey from a poor nation to self-empowerment or career growth remains difficult in the contexts in which she has lived for 21 years, partly due to her position being labelled by the social constructs as 'an alien' or 'black foreigner' (Crush & Peberdy 2018; Okyere-Darko & Tetteh 2016).

From an African women's perspective, the narrator's journey describes how correlated factors intimidate and marginalise professional women migrants in destination countries. Such women have qualifications or experience in certain specialisations and desire opportunities to reconstruct their careers, family, and new identities, but the reality is different (Okeke-Ihejirika *et al.* 2019). I argue that ignorance, naivety, desperation and cultural stereotypes make African women migrants overlook the constraints of host nations and international migration laws. The literature and narrative reveal that prejudices and discriminations are moulded by socio-economic dimensions and social constructs (race, class, gender, ethnicity, marriage, nationality). Nevertheless, the narrator's determination and positivistic attitude to succeed against all odds resonate with other migrants in Cape Town and Western Europe (Dodson 2018; Baldassar *et al.* 2018). The narrator's graduation with a PhD in 2017 was a source of delight. However, she works on temporary contracts in South Africa

due to racial discrepancies, equity laws, or other social constructs that affect employment opportunities. The DHA frequently updates a list of critical skills essential to the country's economy. Consequently, her pursuit of identity and agency as a PhD holder reflects a sense of discontentment, frustration, and internal contradictions experienced by many educated women migrants. This internal struggle often makes it challenging for them to express their perspectives and experiences (Okeke-Ihejirika *et al.* 2019).

The narrative resonates with other Diasporan women, such as Emecheta, a Nigerian writer in London, who opposed patriarchal ideologies. Both narrators deliberately avoid the 'feminist's label' due to conflicting ideologies and identities. The feminisation of migration studies argues that such women confine to patriarchy systems and live satisfactorily in the host countries (Muthuki 2013; Okyere-Darko & Tetteh 2016). Emecheta embraced diverse identities to negotiate social constructs such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, language, success, and citizenship, frustrating her endeavours in Nigeria and the UK (Okyere-Darko & Tetteh 2016). In this chapter, the narrator sees things through 'an African woman' (ibid 107), which principally believes in gender-stipulated roles at the expense of individual progression. Despite the humiliation and betrayal; financial and health struggles; the uncertainty of parenting young adults; and limited socialisation, the narrator pursues serenity and vibrant religious life characterised by courage, hard work and motherhood. She finds comfort and reassurance from the minority South African and Diasporan communities. Living or working among the minority seems safer, unlike black African spaces where xenophobia utterances and prejudices are common. Creating such social-economic networks also acts as a survival strategy. It offers a sense of security for single women families during times of distress like the xenophobia attacks and lootings of 2021.

This narrative confirms that married women accompany their working spouses within patriarchal systems to support their families in Diaspora (Baldaassar *et al.* 2018).

Social constructs often fail to recognise educated women's aspirations to reinvent themselves. Expressing self-agency or challenging patriarchal ideologies is often viewed as defiance of cultural norms (Crush & Peberdy 2018; Muthuki 2013). As time passes, the sense of dislocation and internal contradictions can lead to feelings of isolation, prompting a strong desire for affection and a sense of belonging within the family or new society. Okyere-Darko and Tetteh (2016:102) suggest that motherhood among educated

Diasporans can instil a fear of losing their adult children as the latter navigate their own paths in life. Other research confirms that African women migrants face emotional strains and depression due to a lack of support systems, job-related challenges, and cultural adjustments (Okeke-Ihejirika *et al.* 2019). In contrast, single professional women can relocate to any desired destination for work (Hlalele & Mashiya 2019).

The reflections on cultural and workplace conflicts resonate with foreign teacher conflicts in the United States (US), characterised by disrespect for teacher authority in classrooms, miss-appreciation for teacher's efforts, learners' indifference to education and lack of respect for all migrants (Colomer 2019). In the United States, international migration became a contentious topic when Donald Trump made derogatory statements about Mexicans, portraying them as rapists and drug dealers. As a result, he proposed the construction of a physical wall along the Mexico-US border. However, Latinx teachers continue to navigate these social constructs, despite some reluctance from certain segments of the US population to accept foreigners (ibid).

In contrast, South Africa presents a different scenario. Recent xenophobic attacks targeting Zimbabweans and Nigerians have raised concerns about the country's foreign policies (Dodson 2018; Mlambo and Mpanza, 2019). These incidents have sparked discussions about how foreigners can be effectively integrated into host societies, prompting the need for future longitudinal studies to explore this issue further.

Drawing from anthropology, migrants can reflect on their social constructs, which promote nationality prejudices and social stereotypes among their host countries (Akosah-Twumasi *et al.* 2020). For instance, Chinese employers in the service industry avoid hiring South African women and maximise profits from cheap Zimbabwean workers as a mutual dependence strategy (Liu 2020:147). The strategy is practical, but the latter obtain the jobs without following the stipulated socio-political procedures. Women migrants ought to 're-invent' themselves whilst in foreign countries. Self-inventiveness means taking a new way of life or livelihood (creating blue ocean strategies) as a survival technique (Kim & Mauborgne 2017). For example, the Uber Taxi business was created by thinking differently - cheaper and more convenient with zero competition from rival public transport systems. Such approaches turn marginality into resilience that can open possibilities for self-empowerment, strengthening and sustainable businesses. Thus, studies on African women migrants and coping mechanisms as such blue ocean initiatives are significant.

At the end of the story, due to family circumstances, the narrator's roles shift from a dependent to an independent woman who intentionally ignores patriarchal ideologies to raise her three children in South Africa. In the hope of 'self-fulfilment' and 'desires', she becomes a symbol of persistence and resilience against all forms of struggles, humiliation, and biases in the host country and among her diasporic community (Okyere-Darko & Tetteh 2016). She asserts herself in various ways to maintain family-work balance and career growth and keeps nexus with her extended family (Baldaassar *et al.* 2018).

The current debates argue that the feminisation of migration is a key element embedded in globalisation (Baldasscar *et al.* 2018; Okyere-Darko, and Tetteh 2016). Therefore, this chapter contributes to an emergent body of research that explores the feminisation of Intra-African migration. The self-study also offers empirical insights to validate the desktop analysis and extend the scholarship. Though self-studies are interesting and lead to reflective analysis, this narrative is limited to self-descriptions of one person, thus impossible to generalise all Diasporas. However, the approach offers a basis for comprehensive future studies on the histories, driving forces, post-migration lives and transformation initiatives of female migrants within Africa.

## 8 Conclusion

The personal narrative in this chapter consists of social constructs of a particular African woman migrant in South Africa influenced by gender, marriage, culture, career, nationality and modern norms. The overall impression shows that the agency of a married, educated woman migrant is complex, and her roles in the family structure keep changing within a specified time and context. For sustainability, Intra-African women migrants must have the capabilities to struggle and cope with interconnected identities that shape identity or character, like resilience, determination, and strong-mindedness, even in times of distress. This chapter extends valuable knowledge to the feminisation of Intra-African migration, where the power of appreciation and positivity spurs survival in their peripheral spaces. The chapter highlights the importance of self- and group-inventiveness strategies and effective support networks for educated women migrants. These recommendations align with the broader field of international migration studies, which emphasises the need for initiatives that carefully assess the unique circumstances, needs, and experiences of migrants. By understanding these factors, it becomes possible to respond appropriately and

effectively to the specific situations faced by migrants. Such tailored approaches can help create a supportive environment that promotes the success and well-being of educated women migrants in their host societies.

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