

‘Kwerekwere’ or Zimbabwean? A Burden of Identity for Zimbabwean Youth in South Africa

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Abstract

This article explores the impact of migration on Zimbabwean youths living in the diaspora. It is estimated that more than three million Zimbabweans from all walks of life, including women and children, left Zimbabwe in the last 15 years and now live as documented or undocumented immigrants in various countries around the world. This article reports on the findings of an empirical research study conducted among Zimbabwean youth immigrants in the Gauteng Province of South Africa in 2019. The research involved over 29 Zimbabwean youth immigrants who responded to questionnaires and were interviewed over the telephone and via social media more recently, and visits to South Africa over a period of more than five years observing and interviewing parents and children informally. The study focused on the impact of migration on the lives of the said youth. It investigated the impact of migration, the media, attitudes and socialisation experiences, shaping Zimbabwean youth living in South Africa. It sought to establish the extent to which they have integrated into their host communities. The study found that life in South Africa has brought many opportunities but also challenges for the youth, among them a crisis of identity. Many of the areas in which they live in Gauteng are closed communities in limbo, dominated by the influence of adult connections and the resultant interactions. Whereas many of the youth who participated in the study grew up in South Africa and were educated in South African schools, they felt neither South African nor Zimbabwean. For many of these youth, their experience of Zimbabwe is very limited and that of South Africa broader than that of their parents, creating a rift between the generations and resulting in conflicting senses of identity.

Keywords: youth, Zimbabwe, Gauteng Province, South Africa, diaspora, migration, identity, education, children

Introduction

The study explores the lives of Zimbabwean youth immigrants in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. It focuses, in particular, on children and youths who left Zimbabwe after 2000, which marks the beginning of Zimbabwe's economic, political and social collapse, otherwise referred to as the Zimbabwean crisis. Children and youth shall refer to all individuals between the ages of 12 to 22 years of age who depend on adult guardians for their legal status in South Africa. The article will use the terms children and youth interchangeably. The research mostly targeted secondary school and tertiary learners who have been in South Africa for over a decade. The Gauteng Province, especially the city of Johannesburg, is a major destination for young Zimbabweans (Makina 2010) although Zimbabweans are found in many places in South Africa.

Using qualitative analysis, empirical research was used to explore the experiences of Zimbabwean youth migrants in South Africa. Empirical research is a way of gaining knowledge by means of direct and indirect experience, focusing on understanding the phenomenon in its social, economic and political context. Convenience sampling was used to select respondents in order to discover real-life experiences of migrant youth in South Africa. A total of 29 youth responded to questionnaires and interviews over social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook or via email. In addition to the data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews, other information was gathered from observation and experience of interacting with children in South Africa over a number of years. The sample excluded youth living in informal settlements around Gauteng and youth without legal guardians in South Africa because of logistical challenges. The purpose of the study was to draw insights into some of the challenges faced by the youth and child immigrants in their host country. The study sought to shed light on the question: To what extent have Zimbabwean immigrants been integrated into the society and culture of South Africa?

Many Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa are in a state of limbo, according to Crush and Tevera (2010), this is not a group that has immigrated permanently to South Africa. Thus, these people less likely to 'put down roots'

and achieve the social and economic cohesion expected of immigrants. Zimbabwean diasporans remain intensely interested in their home country, even in anticipation of death, as many would prefer to be buried in their homeland. Zimbabwean migrants are denigrated, devalued and marginalised, especially in South Africa, by local communities (Crush & Tevera 2010). Most of the participants of this study lived in closed communities dominated by adult connections and interactions. This has often made it difficult for them to feel at home in South Africa. Consequently, according to respondents they have resorted to creating hybrid identities in order to cope. This is particularly evident amongst the youth who feel they have to be both Zimbabwean and South African – Zimbabwean to preserve their cultural heritage and to please their parents and South African to fit into their social environment without being labelled a ‘kwerekwere’ (a derogatory term used to refer to black foreigners). The study contributes to the understanding of the lived experiences of contemporary Zimbabwean children and youth living in South Africa as migrants struggling with the burden of identity.

According to the interviews, most of the youth in the sample rarely visit Zimbabwe, but even for those who do regularly visit Zimbabwe, their experience of the country is very limited to brief occasions such as attending weddings, funerals or ‘short visits’ around Christmas to see relatives and friends. Some of the respondents felt they did not have the same emotional ties to Zimbabwe as their parents as they have grown up in South Africa.

Historical Overview

Zimbabweans share a common bond and history with South Africans. The Ndebele Nation which settled in South Western Zimbabwe and in South Africa was part of the Zulu Kingdom under Shaka. Many languages are shared in common by both nations. In colonial times, Zimbabwe was almost twice co-opted to be a province of South Africa; needless to say, Cecil John Rhodes, the former Prime Minister of Cape Town was also the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia. The Rhodesian Security Forces and the South African Defence Forces often trained together during the apartheid era. The military liberation wings of the African National Congress (ANC) and Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) fought together against the settler community. When Zimbabwe received independence, it continued to suffer reprisals for harbouring the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress

(PAC) cadres as witnessed a number of bombings in the early 1980s.

Several Zimbabwean men migrated to South Africa's gold mines as early as the 1800s. South Africa, through the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) popularly known as *Wenela* was set up as a recruiting agency to recruit migrant labourers for gold mines. Many Zimbabweans migrated to South Africa as early as the 1960s and 1970s to work in the gold mines there (Mlambo 2010). Migration in the early days was male dominated, according to Dobson (1998). At the height of nationalist politics, some dispersed into neighbouring countries as refugees and others joined the liberation struggle in Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania. The period after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 saw the migration of many white Zimbabweans who feared the reprisals of a black communist government or anticipated that Zimbabwe would turn out to be another failed African state under a black government (Crush and Tevera 2003:6).

The introduction of the ESAP (Economic Structural Adjustment Programme) in the 1990s and the collapsing economy led many professionals, both black and white to seek greener pastures outside of Zimbabwe. In the 1990s, many Zimbabwean professional teachers and nurses left for the United Kingdom (UK) which was favourable to Zimbabwean immigration. Women were the preferred recruits, especially in the UK and enjoyed better incomes than men in the new country. For Zimbabwe, the exodus of professionals leaving became more significant around or soon after 1996 when the economy, salaries and working conditions of civil servants declined dramatically. Some dissatisfied professionals also moved to neighboring countries, especially Botswana and South Africa, as is well documented in the case of education and health professionals (Gaidzwana 1999). The role played by recruiting agencies for the health and education sector was indeed significant.

The worsening political and economic situation heightened by the Land Reform programme of 2000 forced many Zimbabweans to look beyond their borders (Mbiva 2005; Worby 2010; Crush & Tevera 2010). The outflows were acute during times of election violence especially from 2000 – 2002 and from 2008 – 2009. It was a crises-driven migration. The situation was described thus:

An economy in free-fall, soaring inflation and unemployment, the collapse of public service, political oppression and deepening poverty proved to be powerful, virtually irresistible, push factors to many

Zimbabweans (Crush & Tevera 2010:1; Besada & Moyo 2008).

Many industries closed down, jobs were lost, salaries dwindled and many people's life savings was completely devalued as hyper-inflation rose to unprecedented levels. People felt betrayed and abandoned by their own leaders and by government (Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) 2012). For some, it was time to part with their cherished past and everything that was familiar to them as they ventured into the unknown. Many Zimbabweans left 'en masse' to seek greener pastures within the region while some sought political asylum in Canada, Australia, New Zealand or the UK. Many more with or without passports, travelled the treacherous journey across the Limpopo River into South Africa, where they faced being robbed, beaten, raped, and even murdered in their quest for new opportunities. The actual number of Zimbabweans in South Africa is unknown because of the porous borders and many undocumented immigrants.

Zimbabweans in South Africa

Zimbabwean presence is noticeable in the everyday life of South Africa. Unlike some migrants in other African countries, Zimbabweans are found in across South Africa doing virtually any kind of work they can find that allows them to earn an income. According to Makina (2010), they have become visible in every sector of the economy. The experience of Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa shows that many of them are likely to have, on average, better academic qualifications than the host community, particularly when compared to migrant streams from other SADC countries. This is largely because of investments into education as the root to progress and the high levels of literacy achieved by the Zimbabwean government. Many Zimbabwean workers are well appreciated because of their positive work ethic, and entrepreneurial skills, with the vast majority of them being economic migrants. The economic benefits are achieved at considerable cost, with disruptions to family life as well as to the communal social fabric. In spite of the greater opportunities for employment, Zimbabwean migrants are underpaid and many work below their level of training and experience (Makina 2010).

Unlike Mozambicans and Malawians who usually settle in informal settlements and shacks, many Zimbabwean prefer to settle in medium to low density areas, which is considered a measure of success (Mbiva 2005).

According to Makina (2010), most Zimbabweans in Johannesburg are found in the suburbs of Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville. From the study it was noticeable that unlike other nationals, Zimbabweans do not have a common front, other than meeting in popular spaces, such as churches, hair salons, bars, shops, and nightclubs frequented by fellow Zimbabweans where they meet and catch up on stories from 'home' (Mbiva 2005; Hungwe 2013). As a consequence of this the youths miss out on the socio-cultural dynamics of being South African. For many adult Zimbabweans, as much as they appreciate being in South Africa for its economic benefits, their ties to the 'homeland' remain very strong (Makina 2010). Even after securing some measure of economic success in South Africa, their heartfelt wish is to retire in Zimbabwe. Unlike other emigrants, Zimbabweans preferred to be buried in Zimbabwe than in South Africa, as previously mentioned.

Children and Youth in South Africa

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2009), child migration seems more common in border areas such as in Limpopo Province, which is outside the scope of our study. As attested to by Makina (2010), there is little evidence of child migration from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg. Hence, the focus of our study was on dependent migrants who were brought by their parents or born to Zimbabwean parents in South Africa. Many of the Zimbabweans who migrated to South Africa after 2000 often brought their children with them as the political and economic situation worsened in Zimbabwe. Many of the children came to South Africa in their infancy from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. The study noted that most have completed their primary school education in South Africa, some are in High school and others are enrolled at tertiary institutions. Many of them have friends who are South African and have attended social events with their South African counterparts, such as weddings, funerals or other social gatherings such as parties. However, from the study their experience of South Africa is limited to school and a few social interactions with their South African hosts.

According to the observation and interviews many of the youth spend their free time with fellow Zimbabweans, family relations or friends of their parents from Zimbabwe. The closed nature of the Zimbabwean society in the diaspora, means that many children's connections are tied to the adult connections. The people they know and relate with are often people from

‘home’. In these communities, people within the same social circles go to the same barber, shop, church, and mall and so forth because they know someone from home who works there or runs the establishment. According to studies done by Mbiva (2005) and Hungwe (2013), Zimbabwean migrants are very religious. They have not integrated into South African churches but have brought their own ministers from ‘home’ who minister to them in isiNdebele and chiShona. Churches thus often provide a piece of ‘home’ as people drive across cities and suburbs to meet fellow Zimbabweans, reminisce and catch up on stories from their homeland.

Besides using English, Zimbabwean migrant parents in South Africa continue to speak to their children in Shona and isiNdebele as a way of preserving their culture and language. However, isiNdebele speaking youth feel they have the upper hand as the language is similar to isiZulu, allowing them to easily blend in because by adopting an isiZulu accent and mannerisms as a way of integrating into their new environment. Meanwhile, even among Shona speakers, the youth have made considerable efforts to learn the local languages. The most popular language that youth migrants learnt was isiZulu, even by Shona speakers. Some of the immigrant youth in the study sample spoke more than one local language. According to Hungwe (2013), speaking a local language is an advantage which allows migrants to gain tolerance from locals. Compared to their parents, many youths excelled in communicating in local languages.

Dressing is a key factor as Zimbabweans are easily identified by police by their style of dress. According to Hungwe (2013), the Zimbabwean style was described as long, loose fitting, formal and wearing cheap clothes bought from Chinese shops as opposed the general South African style of tight fitting, smart, casual expensive clothes. Bearing this in mind, the youth adopt local dress styles, so it is often hard to tell them apart from their South African friends by the way they dress or present themselves.

For many youth, their lives have been divided between home and school or college, home being identified with all things Zimbabwean and the school or college environment, with South Africa.

Understanding *Mzansi* (South Africa)

From the interviews a number of the respondents had this to say, indicating that moving to South Africa was a blessing: ‘South Africa is a beautiful place

to live in, there are more opportunities than in Zimbabwe'. At the same time, they acknowledged that life has not been easy: 'At first it was a bit tough because of the language barriers in order to communicate with others but now I am able to speak three South African languages'. Many young Shona-speaking migrants have faced more challenges, than their isiNdebele-speaking counterparts whose language is closer to isiZulu. For Shona speaking youth, 'It has been hard trying to fit in and having a proper conversation with people from here, especially taxi drivers – when you ask [for] directions in English they expect you to ask them in their language, so it is difficult'. The language barrier has often been a challenge for many African migrants coming to South Africa. 'As an African, black South Africans normally expect you to speak isiZulu or some other local dialect'. During xenophobic attacks, language has often been used to determine whether one is a foreigner or not because the respondents highlighted that the attackers would often address you in isiZulu and if you failed to respond you would be assaulted.

Because of school, many youths have been able to learn the local languages or at least attain a passive knowledge of the language to be able to run their errands without drawing too much attention from the local people. However, a major challenge for most of the youth interviewed is that many of them prefer speaking to each other or to their parents in English, especially in the more affluent communities. In some cases, their knowledge of Shona or any South African language is limited. For some Zimbabwean immigrant youth, South Africa is all they have ever known.

Gauteng Province is a 'melting pot' of culture where you find South Africans from all other provinces, as well as the highest number of foreigners in South Africa. Among the youth, especially in well-to-do communities where English is predominantly spoken, there is a tendency toward cultural homogeneity, based on Western values. Amongst this generation, youth find it easier to blend into this new culture.

Many migrant youth, after some initial trauma, realised that they needed to 'fit into the new environment'. This has not been an easy task, nevertheless it is one in which the youth have excelled compared to their parents, because of their openness to new experiences. In observing these youth, it is clear that they have acquired the street lingo, mannerisms and dress code of their South African counterparts. It is often very hard to tell them apart from local youth. In some cases, only close friends know they are foreigners.

For fear of reprisals or xenophobia, some youth respondents reported

that they do not often disclose that they are not South African. One respondent said that s/he had: 'Got chased out of the classroom because I was a foreigner'. Another said: 'Some guys once bullied me because I was a foreigner – they made fun of me and called me names as well'. And also: 'I faced harassment from my peers in high school, especially because I was one of the top students, somehow they always viewed me as a threat. In university no one really cares about your background'. Although a number of respondents felt that they had never been harassed by peers or teachers at school they shared these sentiments: 'I have encountered times where I have been treated unfairly simply because I'm a Zimbabwean'. One of the respondents said,

It took a while to be accepted like in school and other group environments with the terms [on the basis] that you are not from South Africa so whatever you said would be insignificant. However, in some places it was easier, like in class teachers always thinking Zimbabweans are very intelligent therefore it [the classroom] was the only atmosphere [where] you would feel at home other than at home.

Immigrant youth were better integrated into South African society than their parents because of their interaction with the local community. They were often invited to social functions by their South African peers. In some cases, their South African colleagues wanted to learn Shona because they thought it sounded 'cool'. Many youths felt that their South African friends were often protective and supportive of them and wanted to learn more about Zimbabwe. Even after spending many years in South Africa, one was left wondering how much these youths really understood about being South African. Mbiva (2005), puts it well when she makes this reference to England citing one of her respondents:

My life here has taught me that you have to understand the British... To know what is happening to you, you have to understand their language. When I say language I do not mean English. I do not mean that you have to know how to speak English. Of course you do, what I mean is... that language which is not written, the signs and symbols, which they use to communicate among themselves. When they don't want you to know, they will always find a way to exclude you (Mbiva 2005).

Unlike the British scenario faced by this Zimbabwean, the South African situation is complicated by local languages, which are many and varied, besides the culture and various layers of signs and symbols. You really need to have gone to the proverbial 'mountain' to understand its salient nature. Unfortunately, many of the youth only see or experience the tip of the iceberg. As dependent migrants, many youths did not often feel any form of exclusion. As they have grown older they have come to realise that: 'in workplaces there are some cruel workmates who have deep-seated hatred towards foreigners' and also that, 'in some workplaces, they still have the mentality of saying foreigners are stealing their jobs and even if they know that their Zimbabwean colleagues have higher academic or professional qualifications, they still question why foreigners are earning more than South Africans'. As much as they like being in South Africa, these youths realise that they may not enjoy some of the opportunities experienced by their South African counterparts because they are Zimbabweans, and even though they may have documents for permanent residence in South Africa they will always be treated as foreigners.

Alternative Livelihoods: Youth Migration

Due to the nature of migration that took place especially after 2008, many Zimbabweans found themselves ill-prepared and venturing into the unknown, with or without travel documents. The situation at home had become unsustainable. This often impacted negatively on the children and youth left behind. Some children were forced to become adults at a young age, taking care of their siblings. From observations and comments from participants it was noted that those left with grandparents or relatives, the children soon became delinquents or spoilt as parents tried to appease them by giving them lots of money, gadgets, and toys to make up for their absence. Unfortunately, the diaspora experience has left a trail of destruction, as newspapers are awash with stories of marital infidelity, separations and a trail of divorces because of long periods of absence destroying families and impacting negatively on children and youth. We noted that some children and youth start misbehaving, smoking, taking alcohol and drugs, in a bid to seek attention from parents who are seldom present.

In most cases where Zimbabweans migrated to South Africa, one parent often left to look for greener pastures. It was only in rare instances that the whole family would leave as a unit. In some instances, the children were

left with the mother while the father migrated to South Africa. While the husbands sought new livelihood opportunities, unfortunately many women and children, especially in the rural communities were left stranded without any means to support themselves. As their husbands were still seeking jobs in South Africa, in a desperate bid to support their families, some women took up work as cross-border traders. Their children would often be left behind in the care of relatives or friends. Due to the already heavy economic responsibilities endured by the families that would have been left in charge of the children of these migrant labourer parents, in some cases, the children left behind could no longer continue with school or access healthcare and other essential services as observed in the study.

A few children and youth have also embarked on the treacherous journey to South African by themselves. As many of them had not completed their high school education, they have often found jobs on farms or become household maids. Many have been underpaid, abused, kept as sex slaves or even trafficked to other countries. It is not uncommon to find several underage girls in suburbs like Hillbrow, in central Johannesburg soliciting clients. Children on farms are left to herd cattle as well as providing some manual farm labour, with many of them employed to provide menial labour on the farms. Many of the children and youth are attracted to the 'fast pace' lifestyle in Gauteng. Unfortunately, in Gauteng the youth are commonly introduced to crime at an early age and they often have to fight hard to survive. This is particularly the case with young adults.

Children who came to South Africa on their own who are not part of the study experience a wide range of injustices, exploitation, persecution and abuse. For many, their chances of returning to Zimbabwe are slim except in body bags, if ever. The cost of repatriating a body is expensive. Many migrant children and youth in this situation often lose touch with family in Zimbabwe or blame them for their current situation. The children and youth who come with their parents as migrants are considered fortunate as they are often protected from the harsh realities of city life in places like Johannesburg.

Documented Zimbabweans with professional skills, especially teachers, nurses, fare better than their unskilled counterparts. Most of them have been able to bring their families to South Africa. However, some only see their children when they return to Zimbabwe for holidays. Families have been torn apart because of the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. Having realised that being a migrant means there is always a ceiling on the job market

and what one can achieve, some Zimbabweans have resorted to setting up either formal or informal businesses in South Africa that are doing well and even provide employment for some South Africans.

Although many migrant Zimbabwean youths speak chiShona/isiNdebele, their preferred language is English. Their use of Shona/isiNdebele is often rudimentary and limited. This is worsened by the fact that many of the respondents rarely visit Zimbabwe. If they do, the visits are short and rushed – sometimes during public holidays to see friends and family, or to attend a wedding, a funeral, or to renew a permit or passport. Because of the nature of these visits, children do not often have sufficient exposure to the Zimbabwean experience engraved in their parents' hearts, such that they find it difficult to create an intimate bond with folk back home. Unlike their parents, the migrant youths do not have that same connection with Zimbabwe. All they know is South Africa.

Migrant youth are literally caught between a rock and a hard place. Not having spent much of their time in Zimbabwe, they do not often relate, except sometimes emotionally, to what it means to be Zimbabwean. They have never felt 'at home' in Zimbabwe and South Africa does not make them feel at home either. They have been uprooted from the land of their ancestors, the place where their '*rukuvute*' (umbilical code) is buried. They find themselves in what could be described as a sort of spiritual limbo. According to Moyo (2017) the youth: 'find themselves in a luminal state, not fully accepted in their host countries, but also castaways in the land of their parents.... and are often spectators of 'their' own culture'.

The Churches have been instrumental in bridging the gap and bringing a sense of something familiar to communities in the diaspora. Many churches have sent chaplains and pastors to minister to their communities in the Diaspora, not only the mainline denominations such as the Catholics, Methodists and Anglicans, but also African Initiated Churches (AIC) such as Mapostori and Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches such as Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa (ZAOGA) and Family of God (FOG). These churches play a significant role in the lives of Zimbabweans who have been torn away from home. Interestingly, for many Zimbabweans, churches have become a rallying point, a place to meet and interact with fellow Zimbabweans.

Migrant communities suffer from loss of family and support systems. Because of this, many travel long distances for social and religious events such as concerts, weddings or church services to meet with fellow countrymen and

women. For many children, the desire to fit in is very strong and they experience something akin to the Zimbabwean environment where they do not feel like they are foreigners. These occasions have also served as opportunities for young people to meet and connect. For their parents, this presents a perfect opportunity for their children to meet or find a life partner from 'home'. Many parents consider a marriage to a fellow Zimbabwean a safe choice. Intercultural marriages are tolerated, though not encouraged. Most Zimbabwean parents tend to discourage their children from getting into committed relationships with local South Africans, except where it may be convenient for acquiring documentation such as citizenship in their host country.

Different Perspectives between Adult and Children's Experiences

Most respondents agreed that their experience of migration was different from that of their parents'. From the study many of the youths' experiences were closely tied to those of their parents. Children and youth often left their home countries without sufficient understanding of the issues that led their parents to migrate. Unlike their parents, they did not have to look for a job. Most of the children and youth who came as dependent migrants found a home already prepared for them.

A large proportion of the children and youth have adapted very well to the South African context. Many of them speak at least one South African language which is not often the case with their parents. In particular, most Zimbabwean adults have little knowledge of Afrikaans, whereas most children will have studied Afrikaans as a subject at school. In some cases, parents rely on their children to communicate with vendors at the market when they do not speak the local languages. The Zimbabwean youth dress like South Africans. In most cases you cannot tell them apart from local youth. Hence, children find it easier to blend into their host communities.

Because of schooling, many children and youth have a better understanding of the South African life and culture, compared to their parents, whose only contact with South Africans is at work, with limited social interactions. Children and youth interviewed responded that they have shared meals, been invited to parties and weddings and even attended funerals of their South African friends or classmates. Having spent time in South African schools, the migrant youth have been introduced to South African history,

culture and heritage sites, unlike their parents. The youth relate well with South Africans as they were able to cross the cultural divide. A respondent captured well the experience when he said, 'I believe that it has been much easier for me to fit [in] than my parents'. Parents often had fixed notions and stereotypes about South Africans which prevented them from reaching out to their hosts. Another respondent went on to say,

I think our experiences are different because we literally grew up here and enrolled here from primary level all the way to tertiary level, so in my view we connect more with the locals as we grew up with most of them. In our parents' case it is different because they came here when they were much older, so to adapt at an older age it is a bit challenging for them ... which is why they are always mostly against the bulk of activities that the locals indulge in or partake in.

Many of the children and youth did not have strong ties with Zimbabwe compared to those of their parents. Some of the adults also interviewed felt they were in South Africa in order to provide for their families, to give their children a good education so they could secure good jobs, and hopefully save enough money to build a house or start a business, or some other kind of investment so that they would have something to go back to when they retire. Many of the Zimbabwean adults were driven by the crisis in Zimbabwe to migrate. They look forward to going back to Zimbabwe when the political and economic situation improves. However, the migrant children and youth do not feel the same strong emotional bond with Zimbabwe. The home they know is South Africa. They have little expectation of going back to Zimbabwe, even if things change for the better.

A South African Phenomenon

The recurrent situation of xenophobic attacks on African migrants has impacted negatively on migration in South Africa. Many children and youth have not been spared in these barbaric acts of violence. Some have turned to social media spreading false news. Because of such malicious stories, four pupils were injured at a primary school in Thokoza, Ekurhuleni in a stampede as parents were trying to collect their children over a false WhatsApp message

that Somalis were kidnapping children from schools in Katlehong went viral (Mashingo *et al.* 2019). In a similar incident, a teenager from the Democratic Republic of Congo was assaulted in a xenophobic attack at Salt River High School in Cape Town (Mtuta 2019). Incidents of xenophobia, though mostly targeted at black foreign nationals have also impacted negatively on some members of the host community as some South Africans have also been injured or killed at the hands of their countrymen, as they were mistaken for foreigners. Recent attacks have forced foreign nationals to retaliate and defend themselves, leading to more incidents of violence. In all this, a recurrent message given to children and youth is that foreigners are not welcome in South Africa.

Although many of the respondents did not experience these violent attacks personally, they were however traumatised by these episodes of horrific violence. One respondent expressed their exasperation as follows: 'How can someone do that to another human being? We are all humans despite the differences in colour, race or origin'. Incidents of bullying and verbal abuse of migrant children and youth are not uncommon. Some are targeted because of jealousy as in the case of the teen girl grade 10 pupil who was assaulted in a xenophobic attack at Salt River High School in Cape Town. The tension began when she was appointed as class monitor, fellow pupils were against the appointment because she was a foreigner from the DRC (Ibid). In some cases, teachers refuse to use English when teaching. A respondent said, 'I hardly tell people I am from Zimbabwe', and another said, 'people treat you differently when they find out you are Zimbabwean and because of this I find myself being reluctant to tell that I'm Zimbabwean'. Many youths have experienced being harassed at the hands of policeman who have often demanded bribes, especially for undocumented immigrants, 'police harass you demanding a bribe because you do not have travel documents or you forgot your passport at home that day'. Even documented immigrants reported being verbally abused by taxi drivers and by the police. One respondent had this to say, 'I was verbally abused by policemen, though I had my university student card with me. They required that I produce my passport'. For one respondent, 'South Africans are nice depending on how they grew up, but in my experience the white people are nicer to foreigners, that is if they are not Afrikaners'. Children and youth live in fear of violent crime and xenophobic attacks. One can only imagine the trauma experienced by children and their parents as they watch the violent videos of xenophobic attacks that circulate on social media.

The problem with xenophobia is that it has the potential to explode anywhere at any time. Xenophobic attitudes by teachers and fellow classmates can be dangerous; xenophobia affects everyone. The burning of vehicles and angry mobs chasing foreigners from their homes with acts of violence and murder committed in broad daylight has caused trauma to many children and youth. Children who were once talkative can suddenly become withdrawn and not want to play with others. We noted that those who have witnessed episodes of violence, even in the media can have difficulty sleeping, experience nightmares and wake up in cold sweats, screaming. The situation is worse in densely populated communities.

South African leaders need to intervene to stop this violence and hatred of fellow Africans. There is a need to educate people about the evils of xenophobia. Many Africans have done a great deal for South Africa to be where it is today. Politicians need to move away from a politics of hate that sees foreigners as villains. Children and the youth have not been spared and will likely remain scarred for life by these senseless acts of violence and slaughter.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The diaspora phenomenon has impacted both positively and negatively on children and youth. For most dependent migrants, they did not make the conscious choice to leave their countries. Many children and youth have blended well into their new environments and appreciate their parents' efforts and sacrifices to provide a better life for them. Being able to speak at least one South African language is an advantage they have.

Unfortunately, these children and youth are torn between being Zimbabwean and South African. Visits to the country of their birth or that of their parents happens seldom. If they visit, these are often very short and hurried. They do not allow them sufficient time to blend in and connect with their heritage. Hence, they become spectators. The situation in South Africa is not any better. Many of the migrants will never experience what it means to be South African in a real sense. Their contact with South Africans has been limited to school and social events. As a result, they will always be excluded from certain jobs, social events and experiences.

It is recommended that more needs to be done to integrate the youth within their host countries so that they are totally immersed and exposed to the

traditions and cultures of South Africa. Unfortunately, for many migrant parents, it is often their first living in a foreign land and they seldom understand the dynamics involved. The parents most often choose to spend time with fellow Zimbabweans and do not learn from or share in the South African experience. There is need for cultural proficiency and immersion in order for the migrants to appreciate the history and culture of their hosts.

Parents of migrant children face the mammoth task of helping their children to appreciate their host nation, its culture and people. It is also important for them to be constantly aware of stereotypes of their hosts and those of themselves and to overcome them. South African leaders need to do more to stop xenophobia and promote xenophilia. These children and youth need to be taught what it means to be Zimbabwean and to be South African by attending cultural excursions, visiting heritage sites, and spending time with families in Zimbabwe as well as experiencing something of the true South African lifestyle.

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