

# Migration, Culture, Child Socialisation and Changing Family Roles and Relations in Bulawayo, Plumtree and Kezi, Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

The economic crisis that hit Zimbabwe from the year 2000 resulted in many of its citizens migrating to countries that include South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Britain to search for employment. The paper is focussed on how migration affects child socialisation, roles in the family and relations in families among the Ndebele. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews in Bulawayo, Kezi and Plumtree. The findings confirmed that both parents are required in the socialisation of children because each one of them play a specific role in the family. Children who grew up staying with single or none of their parents exhibited a lack of moral uprightness and were more likely to fall victim to social pathologies. A shift in gender roles and infidelity issues were common amongst spouses who were separated by labour migration. The study concluded that in the socialisation of children, gender plays a pivotal role because there are different areas where children need specific and special attention. While it is acknowledged that in the contemporary society, the family structures have changed, it is the idea of this paper that gender roles complement each other in a 'proper' Ndebele family set-up.

**Keywords:** socialisation, economic crisis, migration, family roles, gender roles, culture

## **Introduction and Background**

From the year 2000, Zimbabwe started experiencing serious economic inflation and this accelerated migration to countries where the people of Zimbabwe sought better opportunities. Some people who migrated to countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA) among many other countries went together with their families while others left their children and spouses behind (Crush & Tevera 2010: 9-11). The dismantling of the family unit due to migration distorted the idea of an African family when viewed from Hudson Weems's ideas of Africana womanism (McCray 2011). A detailed explanation of Africana Womanism will also be done since it is the theory that is used to analyse data in this article. The objectives of the paper are to scrutinise how migration from Zimbabwe influenced and affected child socialisation, culture and gender roles within a family unit. The article begins by giving background information about migration in Zimbabwe, as fuelled by economic crises that intensified between the years 2000 and early 2009. Also discussed are the causes and consequences of economic crises in Zimbabwe. There are three major factors that contributed to economic crisis in Zimbabwe and these revolve around politics. The causes are the payment of unbudgeted gratuity to war veterans, involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) war and the land reform programme which took place in 2000. The controversial land reform programme resulted in the imposition of sanctions on Zimbabwe by the western countries.

However, it is important to note that by the year 2000, Zimbabwe was already in an economic crisis which had been caused by the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). The country started experiencing economic depression and stagnation in the late 1980s and in order to arrest signs of a sharp decline, the government adopted ESAP in 1991 (Chidakwa & Chigumira 2016: 24). To achieve the ESAP goals, the government of Zimbabwe was supposed to make public service and parastatal reforms, improvement in the quality of democratic institutions, good governance structures, and eradicate corruption (Chidakwa & Chigumira 2016). However, the government failed to meet these requirements and as a result the ESAP period was characterised by poor economic growth, worsening unemployment levels, the closure of many firms, and deterioration of social services.

Murisa and Nyaguse (2015: 46) observe that formal employment started to decelerate during the period of this policy implementation. They

further note that retrenchments became the order of the day and by 1995, 20 000 workers had lost public sector jobs while 25 000 had lost jobs in the private sector (Murisa & Nyaguse 2015: 46). At this time, the majority of people who left the country were men who left their families behind. The economic challenges that were brought by ESAP strained the country to the extent that resident Zimbabweans could not withstand the challenges that they faced and resorted to migrating to other countries with better performing economies as an immediate option.

Before 2009 and even after, the people of Zimbabwe resorted to a number of options in trying to cushion themselves from the economic crisis which included migrating to neighbouring and overseas countries, engaging in informal trading while abandoning the formal sector, engaging in foreign currency exchange and gold panning. Emigration seemed to be the most common strategy chosen by Zimbabweans, in dealing with the economic crisis. The teaching profession was the hardest hit by the high staff turnover (Chagonda 2012) followed by the health sector (Murisa & Nyaguse 2015). This mass migration not only created a void in the education and health sectors but also created problems in the social lives of the people of Zimbabwe, particularly regarding child socialisation and gender roles, since family units assumed incomplete structures as a result.

During the years 2000 to early 2009, issues of poverty became part of popular discourse such as in greetings, jokes, preaching in church, during conversations at beer halls, in formal and informal gatherings, debates, literature, and even in music (Nhongo 2018). The beginning of the new millennium coincided with what is generally referred to as the Zimbabwe crisis (Murisa & Nyaguse 2015: 47). The arguments raised here are influenced by the observation that massive emigration from Zimbabwe was as a result of the problems that were experienced by Zimbabweans in the period between 2000 and 2010 due to economic crisis that was being experienced. The economic crisis 'is marked by high unemployment, rising inflation, stagnant wages, rising fiscal gaps, and external accounts disequilibrium' (Chidakwa & Chigumira 2016: 24). The economic crisis in Zimbabwe came as result of three major factors which are the land reform, Zimbabwe's involvement in the DRC war and the payment of unbudgeted gratuity to the war veterans (Moore 2001; Dansereau & Zamponi 2005; Raftopoulos 2009; Chagonda 2012). It is difficult in the context of Zimbabwe to divorce economic crisis from the political climate of the day. Murisa and Nyaguse (2015: 47) report that, the other critical

dimension to the crisis was ‘the economic meltdown whose causes are multifaceted; ranging from liberalisation of a fairly infant capitalist sector still in need of some levels of protectionism; economic mismanagement on the part of government ...’. The economic crisis that was experienced in Zimbabwe was an economic war where the country was not fought using war machinery like in the struggle for liberation but was attacked through economic sanctions. Chitando and Mapuranga (2006: 76) observed that, ‘As desperation gripped the national psyche, millions fled into economic and political exile, especially to South Africa and Botswana’. Most people fled from this economic war that was ravaging the country to seek greener pastures in countries that were deemed to be more economically stable.

From the year 2000, when Zimbabwe started to redistribute land under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, the country faced some economic challenges which lasted until early 2009. From the late 1990s, Zimbabwe experienced political and economic decline (Scarnecchia 2006; Raftopoulos 2009). A key aspect of the crisis was the rapid decline of the economy characterised by a heavy fall in industrial and agricultural productivity; and increased levels of hyperinflation (Raftopoulos 2009). The economic crisis was as a result of the unbudgeted payments of 50 000 Zimbabwean dollars gratuity to each of the war veterans in 1997; the Zimbabwe defence forces’ participation in the DRC conflict in 1998; and the land invasions through the land reform programme in 2000 (Moore 2001; Dansereau & Zamponi 2005; Raftopoulos 2009; Chagonda 2012; Dekker & Kinsey 2013; Hamar 2013). According to Chagonda (2012), the government of Zimbabwe used an equivalent of 450 million US Dollars to pay gratuity to the war veterans and in the DRC the government was using an estimated one million US Dollars per day. Murisa and Nyagusa (2015) point out that mismanagement of the state by the government and shrinking of industrial activity, which led to higher levels of unemployment, also resulted in economic crises in Zimbabwe leading to mass emigration to countries with better performing economies. Dansereau and Zamponi (2005) are of the view that the crisis in Zimbabwe began in the year 2000 with the referendum for modifying the constitution proposed by the government and the subsequent mass invasion of farms.

The crisis ended after the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) that brought together the political parties, Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations. The positive results of the GNU in the

economy started showing in March 2009. After the formation of the GNU, the Zimbabwe dollar was officially shelved and replaced by multiple currencies that included the United States Dollar, the Botswana Pula and the South African Rand; at that time the single highest denomination of the Zimbabwe dollar was a hundred trillion-dollar note (Chagonda 2012). During that time, some professionals, particularly teachers who were doing menial jobs in countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland, returned to the country to fill the vacant teaching posts, since the Zimbabwean government was at that time paying salaries in US Dollars. However, the expiry of the GNU after ZANU PF won the elections in 2013 saw the renewal of economic crisis resulting in the disappearance of the US currency from the banks, delays in the payment of salaries, retrenchments, freezing of vacant posts, the introduction of a surrogate currency in the form of bond notes and bond coins in 2016, a shortage of cash, an increase in prices of basic goods and services, and the reintroduction of the Zimbabwean currency in 2019. These problems led to renewed mass migration to other countries like South Africa, in a similar manner to that seen during the decade of crisis.

## **Rationale and Significance**

While migrating to search for employment in other countries was a solution to economic challenges (Tevera & Chikanda 2009; Maphosa 2010), it also created some other social problems which several researchers have focused on. Studies on migration from Zimbabwe have concentrated on economic problems resulting from mismanagement of the state by the government elites and have not focused much on the effects. Tevera and Chikanda (2009) focused on the remittances by the migrants and how they aided household survival in Zimbabwe, while Maphosa (2010) researched on how the remittances by Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa helped in the development of livelihoods in Southern Zimbabwe. Other studies have focused on the effects of migration as a result of the gaps left by professionals such as health personnel and teachers (Murisa & Nyaguse, 2015). On the other hand, Berry (1997), Romaniszyn (2004), Bhugra and Becker (2005), Bhawana (2013), Newman, Hartman and Taber (2014) and Mead (2016) concentrated on the host culture and what happens once migrants get there but have totally not looked at what happens to the culture of the country of origin of the migrants as a result of the void that they would have created. The studies that have

focused on Zimbabwe as a country of origin of the migrants have mainly looked at how remittances have economically improved the livelihoods of those who remained back at home (Tevera & Chikanda 2009; Maphosa 2010). The extended family is important in the African family because every kinsperson has a role to play and every kinship address that is assigned to a member of any African society carries expected social responsibilities (Okot p' Bitek 1986). This paper therefore looks at how migration to other countries affects child socialisation, gender roles and culture within families in the country of origin.

## **Culture and Child Socialisation**

The article is premised on social effects of migration on family members who remain behind when their close family members migrate to other countries for employment with particular focus placed on child socialisation, gender roles and culture. Kok *et al.* (2006) view migration as an act involving change of residence which must include the crossing of the boundary of a migration-defining area. Skeldom (1990) states that migration involves relocation within geographical space, and as such is characterised by a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. Mafukidze (2006: 104) gives a composite definition by saying 'Migration therefore takes into account simple events in the life cycle of the individual, such as moving from one place to another. Distance covered or borders crossed qualify one as local, national, regional or international migrant'. For the purposes of this study, migration can thus be defined as the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location.

Culture, according to Okot p' Bitek (1986: 13), is a philosophy of life as lived and celebrated by members of a particular society. On the other hand, Rendell and Whitehead (2001: 12) are of the view that '... culture is information or behaviour – shared within a community – which is acquired from conspecifics through some form of social learning'. Culture is concerned with the world view of a given society and is socially learnt. Cultures are never static and are not homogenous across different societies. Most people migrated to other countries to search for employment, with some leaving their families and even their spouses behind; this affects gender roles, culture and child socialisation. Mead (2016: 116) notes that the culture of the receiving society is influenced when immigrants come in with different cultures and such a

scenario becomes a threat to the culture of the host country that receives immigrants. The focus of this study is not on the culture of the host country but is concerned with what happens to the immigrants' country of origin when the migrants leave gaps in their family and society. Barry (1997) investigated what happens to individuals who have developed in one cultural context and they attempt to re-establish their lives in a different country with a different culture. However, Newman *et al.* (2014: 165) argue that native born citizens have the power to influence cultures of immigrants, as an important sign of social dominance. They further argue that social dominance motives condition emotional responses of immigrants and shape their engagement with native citizens (Newman *et al.* 2014: 165). Although these researchers were examining culture and migration, their studies were based on what happens to the cultures in the host country of the immigrants and did not assess what happens when migrants create voids in their countries of origin through their departure. Child socialisation is conditioned by a culture that prevails in an environment (Gaitan 2014).

Socialisation is a process by which children adapt to internalise the norms and values of a society (Corsaro 2005: 7). According to Diduck (2003: 78), socialisation can be defined as the process through which one incorporates the norms, behaviours, codes and values of a social system. Socialisation thus nurtures children in societal expectations where boys and girls are moulded to suit what society expects of men and women, respectively (Gaitan 2014). Socialisation is not achieved through formal learning but through exposing children to social institutions of society; with family being the main agent of socialisation (Diduck 2003) and both parents should be active in this process. Francis-Chizororo (2010) researched the effects of socialisation in the absence of parents where children had lost their parents due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The study concluded that socialisation of children by children, within child-headed households would negatively affect their lives during their childhood and later in their adulthood. Mhloyi (2003: 243), however, argues that 'The family, a primary unit of socialisation, is changing rapidly along a continuum of development marked by urbanization, education, exposure to media, and the increased economic complexity'. Francis-Chizororo (2010) and Mhloyi (2003) discussed the problems brought by the socialisation of children by their siblings in child-headed households and the problems brought about by modernity in the socialisation of children. This paper shares part of its focus with Lialiuagege and Rupshene (2008) whose research primarily focuses on the

effects of parents' labour migration on the socialisation of the adolescent children of these migrant parents.

## **Methodology and Theoretical Grounding**

Both rural and urban communities were included in this study to allow for balanced results. A total of 30 research participants were drawn from Bulawayo, Kezi and Plumtree. In Bulawayo, 10 research participants were interviewed from Cowdray Park which is a high density and newly-established suburb with young couples who are most likely to migrate to other countries. A further 10 participants were interviewed from Kezi, at Maphisa and St Joseph's and the remaining 10 participants were from the Brunapeg and Mayobhodo areas of Plumtree. Plumtree and Kezi are rural settings where many people from these places work in South Africa. Four non-probability sampling techniques were used, these being purposive, snowballing, volunteer, and opportunistic, since the research participants were identified in a variety of ways. The interviews were unstructured and they took the form of a discussion where issues discussed were not only about the research participants but also concentrated on other people whom they knew to have been affected by migration with regard to issues of culture, child socialisation and gender roles. Asking the research participants about cases known to them, where migration affected some families helped because there are some issues that these participants could not disclose directly about themselves; it was easier if they related such experiences to other people. Although this study is interested in children, they were not interviewed but only adults. The research participants who were interviewed also helped in identifying others who could provide valuable information. The information gathered was then analysed using Africana womanism.

The arguments raised in this paper are informed by Africana womanism as a theory which was propounded by Cleonora Hudson-Weems in the 1980s intended as an ideology applicable to all women of African descent (Hudson-Weems 2000). The core tenets of Africana womanism as outlined by Hudson-Weems are 'self-naming and self-defining, family centred, in concert with male, compatible, genuine in sisterhood, strong, whole, authentic, flexible role player, respected, recognised, adaptable, respectful of elders, spiritual, ambitious, mothering and nurturing' (McCray 2011:104). Of the 18 tenets of Hudson-Weems's theory, this paper uses: flexible role player; strong; whole;



authentic; and mothering and nurturing since these are the most applicable in a study that deals with culture, child socialisation and gender roles within a family.

On an Africana womanist as a flexible role player, Hudson-Weems (2009:63) says that ‘the Africana woman has never been restricted to the home and household chores, and her male counterpart has more often than not shared the role as homemaker’. Hudson-Weems (2009) goes on to say that African men also have not had the consistent experience of upholding their traditional role as head of the household although being expected to fulfil responsibilities outside the home such as earning money, while serving as the official head of the home. Although the idea here is that roles in the African community have been relaxed and not clearly defined, the paper interrogates a situation where members of a family unit play their roles from different geographical locations due to migration. On the other hand, Hudson-Weems (2009: 65) talks of the Africana womanist as strong because she ‘... has continued to demonstrate her strength and steadfastness in protecting the vulnerabilities of her family’. This idea is used to demonstrate that an Africana woman can still look after the family in a situation where her husband would have migrated to another country in search of employment, although Hudson-Weems (2009: 68) argues that an Africana demonstrates her wholeness by showing ‘her desire for positive companionship, for without her male counterpart, her life is not complete in real sense’. This view is used as a point of departure to unravel the notion that in African communities, gender roles are complimentary and if one of the spouses in a family unit migrates to another country, a void is created. According to Hudson-Weems (2009: 71), ‘... the Africana womanist is committed to the art of mothering and nurturing her own children in particular and humankind in general’. This paper then questions the role of the mother as a nurturer where she has migrated to other countries and leaving her children behind without socialising them personally. These ideas which are some of the key descriptors are used in the next section to analyse the findings.

## **Findings**

It was noted during data collection that when one of the key members in the family unit migrates to another country, the void that remains results in the remaining members facing a number of challenges. The challenges include children becoming independent at early ages and lacking proper socialisation

by the parents, children lacking gender specific socialisation, in cases where the parent of opposite sex to the child remains, the lack of complementarity in gender roles, marriages becoming weakened, and shifting gender roles.

When both parents migrate, it was noted that children are usually left in the care of a maid, or a relative and that the children normally would not respect the person responsible for them, as they would respect their parents, resulting in them failing to acquire morals that are expected by the society. It also came to light that such children would seldom complete their secondary school education as the girls would fall pregnant forcing them to drop out of school. Boys would engage in wayward behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse due to negative peer pressure and lack of control from their biological parents. In Cowdray Park, Bulawayo, there are several such cases that were noted and this observation was confirmed through interviews where a middle-aged male narrated the following:

There is a case of a family here where both parents are living and working in South Africa. The two children belonging to that couple started treating the house maids with no respect as if they were just slaves, ever since these children were at primary school. At times these children would chase away the maids from work once they threatened to report any mischief to their parents or whenever these maids would try to reprimand them of [for] any wrong doings. Their parents would side with their children as they thought that their children were being ill-treated [by the house maids]. The unfortunate encounter is that the girl got pregnant when she was in Form three and the boy who was even younger than the girl started drinking and smoking when he was in Form two. The parents would send them money which was intended to be pocket money for school but they misused that money. They both did not complete school as the boy also ended up refusing to go to school.

There are some other similar incidents that the research participants pointed to which then showed that in situations where both parents migrate to other countries leaving their children under the care of minors, a maid or a relative whom their children do not respect, end up having problems. What was also revealed was that when both parents are away, in families with both boys and girls, girls are the ones who would suffer most because the boys would control

the family and also closely monitor and exert control over the lives of their sisters, interfering with their freedom. The girls in such circumstances assume the roles of cooking for the family, doing laundry and even cleaning the home, which are duties that are traditionally carried out by the mother in an African family. Although such children may live a decent life because of the economic advantage within their families, their social lives and even their future may be affected socially because of lack of proper socialisation. In an ideal African family, there should be mothering and nurturing, a duty fulfilled by the mother in the family (Hudson-Weems 2009). The modern economies that require parents to seek employment away from their families negatively affects the social lives of their children (Mhloyi 2003). It was, however, noted that in situations where one parent remains behind looking after children, the socialisation of these children was better than those who parents has both migrated.

Where one parent remains with the children, gender-specific socialisation would affect those children of the same gender as the parent who migrated. This scenario worsens especially where a child becomes the only odd one in the family, being of the opposite gender to their siblings and to the remaining parent. Both the father and the mother have unique roles that they play in African families and this was evidenced by the fact that the situation in the family where one of the parents had migrated exhibited varied effects. A female research participant from Kezi said:

The situation becomes better when children remain with their mother that when they remain with their father. Imagine where [when] a girl starts visiting the moon [menstruating], how would she tell that to her father? Our culture makes it difficult for the girl to talk about issues to do with sexual reproductive health with their fathers. It is easier for boys to say anything to their mothers because they are the ones who gave birth to them and looked after them until they were grown up than [it is] for girls to talk about anything with their fathers.

Where the mother is absent, girls seemed to be the most affected as they would not have someone to prepare them for motherhood, as expected in the African societies. It was mentioned during interviews that girls require a lot of attention as they need to be groomed socially and hygienically, a role in Africa that should strictly be executed by women and not men. An interesting scenario was noted where the wife had migrated to South Africa leaving her only

daughter and three sons with her husband. A research participant who was the sister of the husband left behind with the children said:

My brother is over protecting [over-protective of] his daughter maybe because he feels that she is weak and is lonely because the mother is away. He doesn't want her to do any house chores like laundry, cooking and cleaning the house. Instead, it is the opposite there because he wants [the] boys [sons] to do such duties which is not cultural [culturally acceptable]. At times he hires people to do the laundry and other things. My niece doesn't even know how to wash her undergarments but is now in Form 4. I wonder what kind of a wife she will become when she gets married.

The above scenario was observed in an urban setting in Cowdray Park. A similar situation was also observed where this time it was a boy who remained with his three female siblings and the father. Despite the boy being the eldest of a family in rural Kezi, it was said that the father could not control his son as he was being used by the mother to monitor everyone in the family while she was away in South Africa. The boy had developed such power and control in the family, more so than his father, to the extent that the father was powerless to assign tasks to the boy, since he would refuse to comply if he so wished. Whenever the father was seen talking to a woman, the boy would report this to the mother via phone or upon the mother's return home. A male adult from Mayobhodo in Plumtree commented on this issue of family control as follows:

There is a woman here who is our neighbour who has been in South Africa for the past 10 years. Her husband stays here at home with their three daughters and a [their] son. The woman is in control of everything, even when she is away, and her son is so spoilt that he doesn't even listen to his father. The woman is a house maid in South Africa and recently she bought a car which [she] came here [in], being driven by another man, whom she said is her driver but we suspect that it is her boyfriend, because she has another son whom she stays with in South Africa, whom we suspect does not belong to this man [the husband] who stays here at home. What is funny [odd] is that this man should never be seen speaking to a woman in this community since that results in quarrels when his wife returns from South Africa.

This situation demonstrates that in families, the one who has the power to sustain the family financially is one who gets to be in control in these modern days, regardless of gender. The one who brings money to the family whether it is the father or mother, appears to have the power to control and determine how children should be socialised even if that parent does not have direct, physical contact with the children.

When complementarity in gender roles lacks because a spouse has migrated to another country, then diverse problems are likely to arise. Gender roles in African families are complimentary, where the female and her male counterpart share the chores (Hudson-Weems 2009: 68). In families in rural areas where the husband had migrated, the woman suffered lack of complementarity and had to carry the burden of assuming the roles for which her husband should have been responsible. In some instances, when the woman required assistance that would have been offered by her husband, she had to engage the paid services of a neighbour. When a neighbour is seen working at the woman's homestead in the absence of the husband, people begin to speculate that the woman is having a love affair with the hired man. In some situations, where a man is hired to herd cattle and perform other duties that would have been performed by the husband, problems are created as this person ends up taking the bedroom roles of the migrant husband. It was the most common sentiment from the research participants that the male domestic employees end up becoming intimate with their employer's wife. It was also said that the intimate relations were initiated by the employer's wife, not by the hired man. A research participant from St Josephs in Kezi whose sentiments were touching on what was said by others revealed that:

A boy who was employed to herd cattle and do other chores at that homestead impregnated his employer's wife. The woman then faked to be sick [illness] and the husband came for just a week. A few months down the line, the husband came back [started coming back] again for regular visits, finding the wife pregnant [and] not knowing that the boy, who is a domestic worker, was responsible for the pregnancy and now we are seeing a boy [the child] who is too dissimilar to him. Today that man loves that alleged son more than he loves his own children.

From this observation it can therefore be argued that fatherhood for those in the diaspora is not modelled along biological lines but, rather, it is a

social phenomenon. However, what was also observed through interviews with the research participants was that in the rural areas when the woman migrates to another country, a maid is not employed to assist with the domestic chores; instead a male person is usually employed to herd cattle and help with other chores like farming. In the urban setting, again it was observed that when the husband migrates, they would not employ anyone at all and when they did employ someone, it would be a maid. This then brings us to the conclusion that in the rural areas, the most demanding domestic chores require men, and in urban areas they require women. It is, however, surprising to note that whilst the rural areas require men's labour, most women are left by their husbands in the rural areas when they migrate to other countries. The research has shown that married men are the ones most likely to migrate to other countries leaving their wives to look after the children and their livestock.

Cases of infidelity resulting in marriage problems are very common in cases where one of the spouses migrates to another country. It also came as a realisation that the mothers-in-law of the daughters who are left behind by their husbands become dishonest with their sons who have migrated. Concerning the issue of infidelity, the common mention by research participants was that daughters-in-law end up falling in love with local men either married or unmarried, and public servants particularly teachers and police officers. It was mentioned that sometimes they even indulge in sexual relations with relatives of the husband, especially younger brothers. In cases where mothers-in-law were living with their daughters-in-law in rural areas of Plumtree and Kezi, the mothers-in-law would most likely be aware of such affairs. It was mentioned that at various homesteads even when the daughter-in-law tried to conceal the affair, the mother-in-law was aware of the situation. She would wake up early, go to the daughter-in-law's bedroom door and greet the man with whom her daughter-in-law was having an affair with the same respect as she would afford her biological son, even going so far as to address him as 'my son'. A female research participant from Kezi who is married to a man working in South Africa when asked about these cases of infidelity said:

Such is no longer [considered] infidelity because everyone knows what a human body requires. What is a woman expected to do when the husband goes to South Africa for five years without coming back, even on a single day? A mother-in-law is also a woman and is aware of the needs of the body, so if she becomes too strict on her daughter-

in-law, then she would be left alone and nobody would fetch water for her, collect firewood for her, and help her in the fields, and so on. So, she is supposed to respect and accept everything that she sees because at the end of the day she is the one who suffers [if she does not].

The interpretation was that since the mother-in-law is a woman, she is also aware of the biological needs of a young woman. These older women who happened to stay with their daughters-in-law seemed to have no power to control them when it came to extra-marital affairs. In some cases, these affairs were kept secret such that community members would not know of these happenings. There was also another incident, in Maphisa, the details of which were relayed by two respondents, where a teacher was summoned by the village head at the school, in the principal's office and was reprimanded by the village head and other elders in the locality for his lack of respect by openly displaying his involvement in a love affair with a woman who was married to a man working in South Africa. The respondents mentioned that the mother-in-law who was staying with this woman was aware of the affair but was powerless to intervene. In such cases, these women who are left behind by their husbands may still be officially married but they have unofficially been turned into maids, tasked with caring for the parents of these men and working in the fields. It is plausible that these men will be romantically involved with other women or even married in their host countries. During the interviews, as reflected in one case above, it came to light that some men go to South Africa for five years without returning. It is difficult to believe that a couple can stay apart for an extended period with things remaining normal, from the socialisation of children to the love between the spouses. Another case in Plumtree is where it was pointed out that a woman who was working in South Africa returned with a son from there who does not belong to her husband who is living at home. It was said that although the man accepted the child, the woman does not leave the child at home in Zimbabwe with his siblings when she returns to South Africa. They speculated that the woman could be married to another man in South Africa. There are many of these issues of infidelity that were mentioned to be peculiar to cases where one of the spouses is working outside the country. The problems associated with infidelity in such families included having children born out of wedlock in extra marital affairs, assault, cases of murder where one is caught cheating, suicide by a spouse who is aggrieved by the other party, and even witchcraft.

Migration of one of the spouses in a family has also resulted in a shift in gender roles in the rural areas. When the man migrates to another country, the woman is left behind assuming some masculine duties which should have been catered for by her husband. However, in this modern-day Zimbabwe, it is not seen as a problem when the woman assumes the duties of a husband at home, but it is perceived as abnormal when the woman becomes the breadwinner from an African cultural perspective. Families today need to have a source of income in this modern-day monetary economy, and the most obvious source of income is through paid employment. Society regards it as abnormal when the woman is the one working out of the country while the husband remains at home. One research participant in Maphisa in Kezi said:

We have a few families here where the woman is in South Africa working there and is sending groceries and other goods here [home] for her husband and children. Such a man who allows that to happen is abnormal in his head [crazy], he was given a love potion [has been bewitched]. How can a man call his wife over the phone to tell her to send them sugar? Such a man would never have a say at home and even if the woman brings a child from another man there in South Africa, that man [the husband] cannot say anything, otherwise the woman should pay *lobola* (bride price) to her in-laws for that man.

Culturally, a man is the one who should provide for the family and not his wife. Hudson-Weems (2009: 63) says that the fact that a man should provide for the family does not mean that an African woman should be restricted to the home to do household chores. Migration has, in some instances resulted in a shift in gender roles and societal expectations in some communities.

## Conclusion

It came to light in the discussion that those children who remain alone at home when their parents migrate in search of greener pastures, tend to lack proper socialisation resulting in them dropping out of school, engaging in drug and alcohol abuse and girls falling pregnant while still young. When children become independent because of lack of guidance from their biological parents, chances of them becoming social misfits are very high. Proper socialisation of children should be done by both parents and not only one of them because each



parent has particular tasks that they are expected to render and accomplish in the socialisation process. Children who are socialised by a parent or guardian of the opposite sex tend to be disadvantaged because culturally, in African societies, there are some issues – especially those that are to do with sexual reproductive health – which the father or a male guardian cannot discuss with his daughter(s). Non-complementarity in gender roles due to migration also result in some problems being faced by the spouse who is left to look after the children and home. The separation of couples also results in infidelity which may then lead to many problems that include assault, murder, suicide, witchcraft, children born out of wedlock, and divorce. The women who are left behind sometimes go for up to five years or more without having seen their husbands and that entails that these women have become unofficial maids who are responsible to look after the parents of the so-called husband and also work in the fields. Gender roles also change due to the absence of one spouse. It becomes a culture shock to African communities when the woman becomes a breadwinner after having migrated to another country and the husband is left in the home country, looking after children and doing domestic chores. More research that focuses on child socialisation, culture, and gender roles where a whole family migrates to another country need to be conducted in different parts of the world so that it can be established how migration affects families in diverse cultures.

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