



EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF RECIDIVISM OF UNREGULATED CIRCULAR MIGRATION AMONG ZIMBABWEAN IRREGULAR FEMALE LABOUR MIGRANT DEPORTEES

Kenneth Mahuni, Taruna Ramessur, Rodgers Musamali

PhD Economics Student (corresponding author) -University of Mauritius, Ass.Professor –

University of Mauritius , PhD Development Finance Student- University of Mauritius

kennethmahuni@gmail.com; t.ramessur@uom.ac.mu; rmusamali@gmail.com

Abstract: *Employing an exploratory analysis using a sample of 20 female Zimbabwean deportees from South Africa, the paper looks into the main factors which stimulate repeat of unregulated circular migration. Besides this, the study aimed at providing deep insights into the lived experiences of the deportees who have a preference for repeat migration in its unregulated form with implications for policy to Zimbabwe as well as South Africa. The study showed the importance of cost and benefit analysis as an important argument in circular migration decisions by the female deportees. Findings also show that young women showed strong desire to embark on unregulated circular migration and made up to 35 % of the respondents. Factors such as unpaid salaries from former employers, lack of access to documentation, attachment with destination country, educational qualifications, experience in circular migrations, unfinished projects at home are some of the factors pushing the deportees to unregulated circular migration. Despite xenophobia being a threat to most migrants in South Africa, 60 % of the respondents expressed little worry about this societal ill.*

JEL classification: j01, j15, j61,i38

Key words: Deportees, Circular Migration, Recidivism, South Africa, Zimbabwe



1. INTRODUCTION

South Africa is one country in Africa which has been inundated largely with economic migrants from almost all over the world. However, main sources of migrants have been predominantly from Africa. Countries proximate to South Africa account for more migration flows. These are Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Migration at times dates back to the 1800s when people would migrate to South Africa to work in mines and plantations (Mlambo, 2010). The actual number of migrants in South Africa has often been a subject of media frenzy. Whilst the true numbers are contested, the bottom line is influx of migrants has brought a lot of headaches to South Africa. The country battles with a number of socio economic challenges which include incessant xenophobic attacks, high crime rate among other ills. At this juncture, it should be noted that we are not drawing causal relationships between the migrant numbers and the socio-economic challenges we have just mentioned.

One way South Africa employs to cope up with growing number of foreigners in the economy is through deportations. The country constantly employs deportations to make sure that only those complying migrants remain. Whether or not this coping mechanism works is a subject of immense debate. Among deportees from South Africa in statistics are scores of women from different countries, with most of them being from proximate group of countries. For instance, in some deportations, women have represented 44 % of total Zimbabwean migrants (Crush et al. 2012 Lefko; Everett, 2007).

However, some of the deportees find their way back as soon as they are deported from South Africa, a phenomena which has since been called 'revolving door migration'. If you are deported is home not 'sweet home' so that you happily make your way to where you belong? Surely, to be at home is better! It is even logical to conclude that, '*home is even best!*' when you are female in the African set up. After being away from home, getting a chance to be home again should be *embraced* as good news. When then is '*home not best?*' especially for a female deportee who has just been deported. Shortly, we explore the concept of revolving door migration, as it acts as a springboard for launching the hypotheses of this exploratory study.



1.1 Unregulated Circular Migration and Irregular Zimbabwe Female Deportees. Does it Matter?

Studying repeat migration by Zimbabwean deportees from South Africa is a very significant discourse in contemporary times. This is so since there are ongoing developments in South Africa which directly or indirectly impact the phenomena of migration in general, for instance the growing anti-migrant sentiments in the host country. This has often manifested in violent attacks towards foreign nationalities. Deportations of irregular migrants has also not stopped by the host country.

The study is also important in that post deportation literature is slowly gaining traction at a time when countries across the globe are preferring to shut their borders to migrants. This can take different forms like numerous migration deterrent laws or tightening /upgrading physical borders with neighbours. During the peak of Covid 19, South Africa erected a 40 kilometer fence along its border with Zimbabwe at a cost of ZAR 37 million (Mail & Guardian, 2021). Whilst reasons for the fence could be many, one of them is to reduce influx of irregular migrants *pouring* into South Africa through illegal entry points. The border fence will thus act as a deterrent to irregular migrants.

Increased probability of failure to cross via illegal entry points (due to the physical barrier in form of the fence), risk of deportation and xenophobic attacks of foreigners ideally should have a 'dampening effect' on migration. In general, women have a high vulnerability during irregular migration. This is due to factors like the complexity of immigration laws, lack of passports and bureaucratic difficulties characterising the migration process and social networks. Irregular female migrants are more vulnerable to abuse such as extortion, abandonment, theft, physical violence, gender-based violence during the transit phase, at arrival as well as during their stay in the foreign country (Araia, 2009). Mawadza (2008) corroborates this view as well through a study of migration to South Africa by Zimbabweans by exploring in detail vulnerabilities of undocumented migrants.

Yet despite all this, the appetite for recidivism of irregular migration by Zimbabwean irregular female deportees remains insatiable. What then are the socio-economic drivers of recidivism of unregulated circular migration among these women? In addition, this study seeks to follow the



perspective of Babar and Gardner (2016) who examine circular migration in the Gulf States. To them, most discourses on circular migration have focused mostly on the ‘outcome’ of the process itself instead of the lived experiences of the migrants who have experienced circular migration. So when they explore the discourse, thrust is put on lived experiences. We believe that since unregulated circular migration of female labour from Zimbabwe fit to what Crush et al (2017) call ‘Migrants in Countries in Crisis’ (MICIC), focusing on lived experiences of the deportees in a number of dimensions better informs policy response.

The study is grounded on the ideas of Constant et al (2012) who borrow from the perspectives of Constant and Zimmermann (2011). Furthermore, we use four dimensions of circular migration given by Triandafyllidou (2010) to also build on the theoretical framework. In all the perspectives, the authors try to broaden our understanding on the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of circular migration in general. They indicate that circular migration is known as repeat migration as well as ‘*va-et-vient*’ and is better understood as ‘revolving door migration’ in some contexts. Circular migration can occur both to unskilled as well as skilled people. Constant et al (2012) further highlight that serious study of the phenomena in migration economics has its genesis approximately two decades back, since then there has been a mushrooming of research trying to account for this migration feature. Vertovec (2007) also highlights that circular migration has gained prominence in migration policy issues.

Circular migration can exist in different forms. These include seasonal (the most dominant type occurring between poor and rich countries), non-seasonal, mobility by professionals among other forms, Constant et al (2012). By its nature, circular migration in general tends to have some form of ‘order’ when it occurs as they are means to actually see to it that migration flows occur within specific guidelines and with support of authorities (Constant et al 2012; Tijera et al 2016). Circular migration can be thought of in four dimensions as given by Triandafyllidou (2010). We summarize them in the table below;

**Table 1: Four Dimensions of Circular Migrations**

Dimension	Definition
Space	Relates to crossing of the physical border.
Time	Relates to duration of stay at destination country. It is limited by nature and varies from weeks, years but is not more than a decade.
Repetition	Should be at least two time back and forth from source to destination country.
Scope	Circular migration primarily for employment, trade, investment and other economic activity.

Source: Authors compilation from Triandafyllidou (2010)

Whilst circular migration tends to be ‘formal’ on the other hand, unregulated circular migration tends to be informal. In fact, Constant et al (2012) argue that the latter tends to be established by migrants themselves unlike the former. This means that the latter is spontaneous by nature and hence not so easy a phenomena to actually study. All the same, understanding the actual dynamics on this migration type remains essential. The gendered nature of this phenomena is important but remains underresearched.

1.2 Objectives of the study

Broadly, the study seeks to analyse recidivism of unregulated circular migration among female labour migrants from Zimbabwe to South Africa . Besides this, the sub objectives of the study are to;

- Examine the demographic profile, drivers of unregulated circular migration as well as survival of irregular female labour migrants at source and origin countries .
- Explore the risks and lived experiences with unregulated circular migration of irregular female labour migrants.



2. OVERVIEW OF EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Literature on circular migration is still scanty. Furthermore, the study of unregulated circular migration by Zimbabwean female deportees is unique justifying the need for investigation. Briefly we explore growing literature on a wide ranging circular migration themes in different set ups.

Martinez et al (2018) used a sample of 1,109 Mexicans to examine the impact of immigration enforcement programs and various social factors on repeat migration intentions to the USA. The study shows that strong social ties reflect high intentions of crossing again. Furthermore, the researchers found that any immigration policies aimed at enforcement tend to fail the higher the social ties of migrants.

Williams and Crush (1998) studied circular migration by Mozambicans to South Africa. Mozambique contributes one of the highest number of migrants to South Africa alongside Zimbabwe. The authors show that the number of Mozambican deportees from South Africa starting in the early 1990s has been increasing steadily in as much as the number of migrants entering South Africa. Up to around 1994 they show that close to 500,000 Mozambicans had been deported and the majority of these have been undocumented migrants. The problem indicated by the authors is that once Mozambicans are deported, they make their way back to South Africa thus confirming 'revolving door migration'. Women were also found to be actively involved in migration accounting for 27 per cent. Migrants were found to be working in sectors such as construction, domestic work, electricians, farm work and others. Further, the study indicated that 40 per cent of Mozambicans were happy with what they were getting in South Africa in terms of wages than in their home country. The study also shows that majority of deportees are young people and unmarried adults with some qualifications enabling them to be able to seek employment in different sectors.

A study of circular migration in the Gulf States was conducted by Babar and Gardner (2016). In the book chapter, the authors examine Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Oman. The study analyses the nexus between the Gulf migration system and circular migration framework. Overall, the authors seek to show some of the missing gaps in the conceptualization of circular migration. Using an ethnographic approach, the authors bring



several dimensions which challenge several notions about circular migration. They show the importance of lived experiences in shaping the understanding of dynamics of circular migration specific to the Gulf States. For example they indicate that the notion that circular migration itself creates a win /win situation to all does not always hold in relation to the Gulf migration system given that it is largely exploitative in nature. They challenge also the view that circular migration is voluntary and a matter of choice by migrants. They highlight that in some contexts it may apply but not in others. Lastly, their analysis of circular migration in relation to the Gulf States broadens horizons on issues often overlooked.

A report by Public Safety Canada (2015) explores a number of themes among Haitian migrants. The report tackles subjects such as circular migration, deportations and organized crime linked to migration. The report looks at two things; (a) impact of deportees on their families and Haiti Canadian communities and (b) effect of deportations on establishment of transnational organized crime networks. There are a number of important findings noted in the report, the chief impact being that deportations strongly impact on crime networks. It was also noted that deportations in Canada have mainly been influenced by political and policy considerations which has often evoked debate in the two countries. The report noted also that the deportations have often had socio-psychological impacts on the separated families. Furthermore, the deportees usually suffer stigma and alienation back home such that fitting well into society was difficult. Due to all this, the report concludes that the risk of repeat migration by Haitian deportees is very high.

Kokil (2011) explores the experience of Mauritius with respect to circular migration. In the perspective of the island country, circular migration is modelled to act as a developmental tool benefitting the sending and host country. This has seen Mauritius sending its people to countries such as Canada dating back to 2006. Then, it was in part to a response to unemployment in the domestic economy (Kokil,2011).

Besides emigration, Mauritius has also been welcoming foreigners to their economy through scholarships programs for instance. Sectors such as construction and manufacturing have been opened up to foreign workers. Part of the Mauritian diaspora which at some point was estimated to be around 250, 000 has been instrumental in helping out family members and the country through remittances and other interventions. Upon return, there are deliberate attempts by the



government to ensure that returnees reintegrate well. This takes the form of support to setting up ventures and other reintegration programs. For Mauritius, circular migration has been organized and has benefitted the country a lot. It has mostly resulted in win/win among the host and sending countries as is widely believed in a number of contexts. It has resulted in addressing the economic needs of the sending and receiving countries. The case study of Mauritius shows fruits of well-organized migration underscoring the important role played by cooperation of authorities in sending and host countries.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Not much is known about Zimbabwe's female labour's irregular migration experiences. To this end, an exploratory research design was found to be a suitable approach to address the research problem. This resonates with Chirisa and Dumba (2010) who posit that data on illegal migration is mostly undocumented and hence exploratory approach is appropriate. Three surveys were carried out in Nemanwa, Mashava and Masvingo town . All these are places in Masvingo District and were surveyed from January to February 2021 for the main survey and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for the last leg of the survey was conducted in Masvingo town.

We started by exploring secondary data sources. Partly relying on secondary data allowed the researchers to dissect deeper into the discourse of circular migration and main themes which have been examined. Also it allowed us to be able to appraise other studies and reports on the subject. Secondary literature is also instrumental in supporting primary research findings, Shoko (2015). In addition, this served as an anchor to primary research which was also conducted later on to buttress secondary research carried at the initial stages of the study. Document overview included, reports, case studies as well as online peer reviewed publications on circular migration.

In addition to the above, secondary data also helped to compliment the development of the two survey questionnaires which were used in the study. One questionnaire was used in the initial phase of the survey. The second one was used for the Focus Group Discussion carried later on as a follow up on fresh perspectives gathered from the initial phase . FGD were made up of several thematic areas which the moderator made use of to lead discussions.



To ensure that our study does not violate rights of the target population or endanger them in any way, ethical clearance was sought from the Ministry of Home Affairs in Zimbabwe. The researchers also prepared a Statement of Informed Voluntary Consent Form (SIVCF) to be used during the interviews to ensure confidentiality and consent of the respondents. The form was used in conjunction with the questionnaires and the clearance letter. All these documents are attached to the main paper. Two field assistants were trained with the help of Great Zimbabwe University Social Anthropologist specialist Dr. Josiah Taru to assist with designing of data collection tool. Respondents had reservations on having their voices recorded during the sessions as well as video filming despite efforts by the researchers to assure them of confidentiality. Participants expressed their fears due to their clandestine migration journeys. As a result, we resorted to taking notes manually .

The target population were female deportees who had embarked on unregulated circular migration. For this study circular migration is when one has been ‘two time back and forth from source to destination country’ as suggested by Triandafyllidou (2010). The researchers were able to reach out to 20 subjects who participated in the study against a target of 25. The other five who had promised to participate declined a few days before the interviews despite having made a commitment to participate earlier on. Female deportees are not easy to locate just like other irregular migrants. This was further worsened by the fact that data collection was conducted during Covid 19 era. The pandemic restricted mobility of people and social interactions. All these and other health protocols made data collection a difficult task. In compliance with government requirements, the researchers followed laid down health protocols in interacting with respondents. These included , physical distancing, using hand sanitisers and face masks.

Adopting the approach by Chirisa and Dumba (2010) in identifying and accessing suitable subjects for the study, the researchers used snowballing sampling technique to be able to identify relevant respondents until the desired number was reached. So as to access the ‘rare and hard’ to get target population, snowballing allowed identifying key informants who in turn helped in locating others. Shoko (2015) also used snowballing technique in identifying Zimbabwean migrants for a study in South Africa.



First two respondents were interviewed in Masvingo town. Since they were people the researchers knew before, it was easier interacting with them as they shared the same neighbourhood with one of the researchers. Interviews were kept professional so as to avoid bias in responses. The interviewees referred the researchers to other respondents who were located in Nemanwa and Mashava. Furthermore, to avoid bias, the researchers explained the significance of the academic study with the respondents and how the study was pertinent in helping us understand repeat of unregulated circular migration by female labour migrants. Throughout the discussions, the researchers maintained professionalism.

Discussions from the main interview led to new dimensions. This prompted the researchers to pursue further the perspectives. This culminated to a Focus Group Discussion which was held in Masvingo town. For example, the researchers wanted to explore further experiences the women had about irregular migration, in particular how they were initiated into it. Moreover, we needed to have a broader picture of the sort of multi-dimensional risks the women faced in unregulated circular migration. These lived experiences could be better addressed through focal groups. The focus group focused on several thematic areas.

The focus group also allowed the researchers to further probe aspects such as experience during reintegration back home of the deportees in their respective communities. Besides this, the focus group allowed the researchers to understand further other issues which respondents were not so comfortable to share privately, Valdez et al (2013) cited in Madebwe (2014). Findings on these will be presented in later sections.

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study revealed important perspectives about recidivism of unregulated circular migration of Zimbabwean female deportees. In this section, we present as well as discuss the findings in two parts. Annexure A presents the main demographic characteristics of the female irregular migrants we came across during data collection. The respondents were not keen to use their actual names during the interviews. This prompted the researchers to develop name codes to ensure anonymity of respondents. Msv1-Msv10 stands for the first respond to the tenth who were based in Masvingo town. Nem11-Nem17 is the eleventh respondent to seventh, all based in Nemanwa. Then Mash18-Mash 20 represents the eighteenth up to the twentieth respondent,

all were drawn from Mashava town. (The two sets of questionnaires which were used to lead through the research are provided as separate attachments).

4.1 Demographic profile of the migrants

Age profiles of deportees.

The study shows that the mean age of the deportees was 30 years. Most females involved in unregulated circular migration were found to be ranging from early 20s to the late 30s. The modal age range of the deportees was 20-39 years and they make up 60 per cent of the deportees.

Education Level

Education remains pivotal in Zimbabwe. The government has made milestones in delivering education to its people. The findings show that at least 55 per cent had attained secondary education, 30 per cent had a tertiary qualification whereas only 15 per cent had primary education level. Figure 1 shows the education profile of deportees.

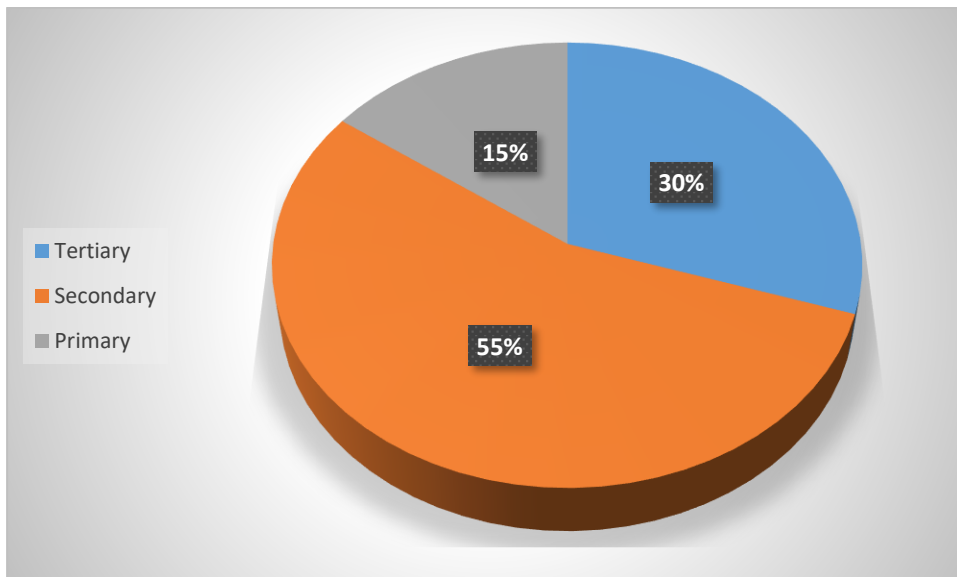


Fig 1: Education profile of deportees

Source: Fieldwork

This finding underscores the efforts Zimbabwe has made in improving Human Capital Development through education. The findings indicate the importance of level of education in explaining circular migration by deportees. One respondent had this to say;



After graduating from Masvingo Teachers College, I stayed for two years in Zimbabwe without securing employment, although some of my college mates managed to get work. In 2015 I decided to accompany a friend skipped the border to South Africa to look for a job. Though I am yet to secure a teaching job, the various jobs I have been engaged in helped me to survive and also help my family back in Zimbabwe. (Msv6, 23/10/21)

Education has allowed deportees to possess some comparative advantage over other migrants as it enhance their chances of employment in South Africa in the process encouraging circular migration. Upon being further probed on the nature of the jobs she had been doing, the respondent had this to say;

Earlier on when I arrived upon realizing that it may not be easy for me to secure a teaching job since I did not have appropriate papers, I decided to take up domestic work. Later on, I secured a job at an Indian owned shop as a sales girl. Since I could speak English fluently, I have been able to secure my job. (Msv6, 23/10/21)

A similar pattern was observed by Williams and Crush (1998) among Mozambicans who have frequently embark on circular migration to South Africa. Most of them possessed qualifications such as electricians, drivers, plumbers and others. All these enhance chances of employability at destination of migrants and hence increasing probability of circular migration.

Other findings elsewhere slightly differ with this study regards to the profile of women practicing circular migration .GSOEP findings as noted by Constant and Zimmermann (2011) cited in Constant et al (2012) note findings from GSOEP and conclude that most migrants are young, unmarried and lowly educated. This is opposed to Zimbabwean who are normally educated migrants.

Marital Status

The study findings indicate that 60 per cent of the respondents interviewed were not married, whereas the remaining 40 % were married. Zimbabwe is a society which values family life highly in which in most cases the husband is the one who normally takes risks perceived as high when it comes to looking after the family. Irregular migration is one of those risky adventures. One respondent who had been on circular migration since 2007 had this to say.



I was married for only two years then we divorced with my husband, I then returned to stay with my parents together with my two children. After failing to secure employment I decided to try my luck in South Africa by following relatives who regularly go to South Africa so that I look after my family and parents. (Nem14, 09/10/21)

From the study it shows that the chances of repeat unregulated circular migration were higher amongst unmarried women. The results of the study can be comparable to those of Williams and Crush (1998) who examined the Mozambique-South Africa migration corridor. One of the findings was that the majority of migrants were mostly young and unmarried adults.

The findings concur with two important of the five pillars of New Economics of Migration Theory by Stark and Bloom (1988). One of the importance of migration decisions at the household level is the desire for risk aversion. The interview with Nem14 confirms this. First, the interviewee feels exposure to poverty once she now shoulders the burden of single handedly raising her family as well as looking after her own parents. Secondly, the decision is arrived upon at household level whereby the children have to remain with her parents whilst she began to migrate.

4.2 Drivers of unregulated circular migration

Social networks at destination country

The study also shows the importance of social networks among the deportees as one of the triggers of recidivism of circular migration. Social networks have been found to be important in migration journeys the world over as they help to reduce the costs and risks associated with migration. Costs are even much higher when it becomes unregulated circular migration among women. Araia (2009) shows that women are particularly vulnerable to abuse such as extortion, abandonment, theft, physical violence, gender-based violence during the transit phase, at arrival as well as during their stay in the foreign country. Shoko (2013) also found the importance of social networks among Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa as they survive as transnational citizens. In addition communication among the migrants using platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook were found to be among the common means linking migrants and people back home.

In terms of strength of social network at destination country, the study discovered varying experiences among the migrants. Deportees who have been on circular migration for 10 or more



years had closer network with local South Africans. These tend to help out migrants a lot by creating strong bonds. In the study, 6 of the interviewees had 10 or more years in circular migration. Two of these women indicated that they had also learnt local languages which enabled them to have a sense of belonging and it acted as a security in their respective communities. Deportees with few years of circulation migration were found to rely more on fellow Zimbabweans as well as relatives. On the other hand however, deportees with even lesser years of circular migration mostly depended on relatives and at times on fellow Zimbabweans.

One deportee who despite having good qualifications, the fact that she had recently arrived and still had little ‘connections’ around had found life difficult. The hope is that with time her fortunes will improve as her network grows. A respondent from Nemanwa highlighted the following:

My brother, South Africa is also tough especially if you do not know anyone. You need information about where to find jobs. Alone it is not easy as South Africa is now flooded with people everywhere. (Nem12, 09/11/21).

The findings of the study thus concur with Network Theory of migration highlighted by scholars such as Massey et al (2013) which emphasizes on the important role played by social network as a significant driver of migration in general among people in different contexts. Empirical evidence supporting repeat circular migration is evident in studies focusing on Mexicans migrating to the USA. Martinez et al (2018) found that stronger social ties of Mexicans with their kith and kin in the USA was making it difficult to manage this type of migration.

Duration of stay in South Africa (destination) prior to deportation

Length of stay prior to deportation was found to be useful in helping us understand recidivism of unregulated migration by the females under study. 12 of the respondents showed that they had stayed in South Africa for over five years prior to deportation and had often been able to come back to Zimbabwe and returned to South Africa using the means they had used before. Thus the length of stay in the study was found to help migrants to further deepen their social network especially with locals as well as fellow Zimbabweans.



The findings also indicates the importance of length of stay as it comes with ‘attachment of place’, as a very important component in migration which motivates repeat migration as studies elsewhere have shown. Studies by Chavez (2012) and Acosta et al (2014) show the significance of attachment to place as a strong force to repeat migration (Martinez et al., 2018).

In a study of circular migration of Mexicans to the USA, Martinez et al (2018) show the importance of attachment of place. They argue that individuals can actually have a strong desire to embark on whatever it can take including engaging in ‘repeat unauthorized migration despite the threat of incarceration’. So to the authors , they are those migrants who even call the USA ‘home’ as such that sense of place stimulates repeat migration. One of the respondents had this to say.

I have been in South Africa for more than 15 years. It is my home now. I have managed to build strong relations with locals, I am a part of them now. There is no single day I can even go to bed on an empty stomach. (Msv5, 23/10/21)

Spending Priorities at Home

One of the findings the study made was that women embark on unregulated circular migration as a last resort. Stark and Bloom’s (1985) New Economics of Migration Theory also shows that households may opt to migrate so as to improve their livelihoods if they feel deprived when they compare themselves to some reference group. This notion was evident in the study. There exist some sort of ‘competition’ among migrants which however is aimed at improving their livelihoods. The table below shows the rank of spending priorities by the respondents. The researchers decided to divide the priorities into three. Respondents were probed on their spending priorities as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Spending priorities areas at home**

Spending Priority Area	Number of respondents	Rank	Percentage (%)
Home improvement (e.g. building, furniture, livestock)	5	2	25
Family upkeep	12	1	60
Business	3	3	15

Source: Fieldwork

Important inferences can be made from the above results about spending priorities of true population of the females who embark on unregulated circular migration. 60 per cent of the women motivated to repeat unregulated migration have family upkeep as a primary goal. This ranks as a first priority. 25 per cent of the women showed the desire to make home improvements in its various forms, this comes as a second priority. Lastly, business ranks lowest for the respondents. Ranking of family upkeep can actually be in tandem with a study by Crush et al (2017) about the link between ‘Migrants in Countries in Crisis Countries’ contexts such as Zimbabwe and large scale out migration. Thus the long term crisis has also shifted the burden of family upkeep to females over the years. The incidence of the burden is likely to be more in unmarried women such as the case of Nem14 we examined earlier on.

Interestingly, some deportees indicated that business is the least of their priorities as some have had a disappointing experience with ventures in the past.

I have entrusted my folks at home with money in the past to start a poultry business. I never enjoyed a single cent on the venture. Instead I would be sending money to sustain a business in which I had no gain. (Mash20, 13/11/21)

Businesses at Destination (if any)

The study results show that 50 per cent of the respondents had at least some form of business in South Africa so as to augment income. This was prevalent in the age range of 30-47 years. Crush et al (2017) show that 42 per cent of Zimbabwean migrant entrepreneurs arrived in South Africa from 2000-2010. From our study, 25 per cent of the respondents arrived during the period 2000-2010. Securing a form of venture to supplement income enhances repeat migration



chances. This is even higher for deportees who have stayed longer to be able to start some form of business.

4.3 Risks and lived experiences with unregulated circular migration.

Second leg of the study involved one Focus Group (FG) discussion. The interviews carried out in the first leg of the survey helped to open new perspectives which the study wanted to probe further. These would help in giving deeper insights about lived experiences and risks both at home and destination. The FG was made up of five deportees. Dr. Taru from Great Zimbabwe University who has extensive experience in sociology as well anthropology helped to moderate the focus group discussions. The research team was also made up of Mr. Wilfred Chinhanho a psychology lecturer from the department of social studies , Great Zimbabwe University. He is also a PhD Student and assisted in taking notes.

The respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Unregulated circular migrants encounter a lot of risks through circular migration. Martinez et al (2018) in their study of irregular migration of Mexicans to the USA emphasized on the importance. In their analysis, they considered risks largely focusing on (physical and social risks) as an important control in the migration decision matrix of the respondents. This study followed similar perspectives and add on to risks identified by Constant et al (2012) which include, discrimination, xenophobia, exploitation and lack of employment. Risks are important in that they also enter as an argument in the migration decision especially when one has a high chance of embarking on irregular migration. The responses obtained on the FGD on the various risks faced by the women are ranked in table 3.

**Table 3: Assessment of risks encountered by irregular migrants**

Risk	Rank
Loss of belongings and sources of livelihood at destination (South Africa)	1
Unemployment	2
Exploitation	3
Xenophobia	4
Deportation	5

Source: Fieldwork Focus Group Discussion

Loss of belongings and livelihood in South Africa, the destination country

The study reveals that deportees fear loss of belongings and livelihood more than the other risks. The risk is ranked highly, this shows that the women are largely motivated primarily by economic factors. It confirms results in other studies on Zimbabwe which show that economic factors are the major causes of outward migration whether regulated or unregulated. These include; Crush and Tevera (2010); Crush et al. (2012); Madebwe (2014); Lunga (2015); Munyoka (2020); Matose et al (2022). Some of the studies look at migrants in general whereas others focus on the gendered dimension of the phenomena. The findings concur with theories of migration such as Neo Classical Economics (Ranis and Fei 1961; Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1969 and Harris and Todaro 1970) and the New Economics of Migration Theory (Stark and Bloom, 1988). These schools of thought however do have conceptual differences but by the end of the day they mainly point to economic factors as the drivers to migration.

Unemployment

Unemployment ranks second. This finding shows in as much as the deportees will be fleeing the crisis in the home country (Zimbabwe) it is not all rosy in the destination (South Africa). Employment is not instantaneous upon arrival, there is a considerable lag time from arrival until one gets a job especially for those with a weak social network. For one to be employed as a



migrant, worse still an irregular one- it is contingent not only on your qualifications but your social capital should be strong as well. An interview with Nem12 earlier on confirms this. This finding can be explained in part by Crush et al (2017). Their study shows that 20-30 % of Zimbabwean migrants find themselves employment in the informal sector. This sector is rather a 'safe' haven for one who is an irregular migrant and offers a cover to the migrant from authorities.

Xenophobic attacks towards migrants

This finding came as a surprise to the researchers. It is logical to assume that the general consensus among the public would be that xenophobic attacks towards foreigners in South Africa should be a compelling factor for one to leave South Africa and never think of returning back. Graphic images of the violence which is often associated with the xenophobic attacks have always gone viral, indirectly sending chilling warnings to even future migrants. This ought to have a dampening effect on outward migration. The study helps to confirm seminal contributions such as that of Massey (1993) to the Neo Classical Economics school of thought. Massey's contribution was that an individual will calculate costs and benefits to migration. Once benefits are greater then they will definitely migrate to the desired destination. Zimbabwe as a sending country in crisis as noted by Crush et al (2017), the benefits to be obtained in the destination country are much higher than the costs to be borne hence the logical step for the deportees will be to continue with unregulated circular migration. In fact, in one of the interviews by Crush et al (2017), two respondents had this to say about xenophobia:

“While the hardships which I face in South Africa are many they are still better than the hardships I endured back in Zimbabwe. In the event of future attacks, I could try and survive because at least I will be doing something.” (Johannesburg Interview No. 13)

“I could never go back because there are no means of surviving. I could simply have to look for an alternative way to survive while in South Africa. Even if they attack me I will look for another means to survive as long as I am not dead.” (Johannesburg Interview No. 19)

*Experiences on unregulated circular migration*

Whilst properly defining ‘safe migration’ is not easy given the non-static nature of the concept (IOM Global Thematic Paper, n.d.) at least a starting point when going to another country is to have proper and authorised travel documents. In Zimbabwe, the main document people need to travel to South Africa is the passport. At some point a temporary document known as Emergency Travel Document (ETD) would be issued out. During the FG discussion, the responses of the deportees on the issue of the documents is tabulated in table 4;

Table 4: Responses on travel documents

Respondent	Response on travel document
1	Had a passport but overstayed.
2	I had an emergency travel document (ETD) which expired later on.
3	Never had a travel document.
4	Had a passport but overstayed.
5	Passport was stolen.

Source: Fieldwork, Focus Group Discussion

The responses show that the interviewees are irregular migrants with different states of irregularity. Their states to irregularity conform to definitions given by a number of authors including; Uehling (2004); Jordan and Düvell (2002) and Chappell et al (2011). Ideally, it is the responsibility of the government to ensure safe migration of people through providing all the necessary support especially when it comes to information, risk mitigation and safe spaces (AFEW International, 2020). Failure to ensure this increases exposure of migrating populations. The risk is higher to women on irregular migration (Araia 2009; Mawadza 2008). In the focus group discussion, the researchers investigated further so as to understand why this was the case with respect to travel documents. Some respondents highlighted that nature of the jobs they do in South Africa allow them little time off so as to have enough time to obtain documents. Desire of the need for proper travel documents was evident among the respondents though. However, the processes involved in obtaining documents had a dampening effect on this desire as noted from one respondent.



To be honest with you, I also need proper travelling documents but I do not know anyone at the passport office. Someone who said they can help me getting someone at the passport office to sort travel documents for me asked for USD 200. This is too much money for me, I cannot afford. If I knew someone may be it could come to less. (Focus Group Discussion 27/11/21).

Experience integrating back home

Integrating back in communities by deportees is one of the critical areas often not well researched in post deportation literature. If respondents are not properly integrated following a *hard landing* from a deportation experience it may lead to grave psycho-social consequences. Respondents had varying experiences in this regard. Some felt unwanted and unwelcome as one respondent highlighted:

When I got deported, I left with only a few belongings I managed to grab. All the money I had worked for and uncollected revenue from my customers remained behind. Coming back with nothing to my expectant kids and parents has been an excruciating experience. (Focus Group Discussion 27/11/21)

‘Coming back with nothing’ is often a vocabulary difficult to swallow when you are a returning migrant in Zimbabwe. All eyes are normally on you given that you will be coming back to a territory you are familiar with (i.e. the territory of crisis). Moreover, it puts pressure on you as you are compared with some reference group from the particular community or household where you hail from (the very foundations of Stark and Bloom’s New Economics of Migration Theory of 1985). So whether you migrated irregularly or regularly it does not matter much, what you bring with you matters most. Thus migrants suffer from a crisis of expectations in their respective communities. As a result it takes its toll on them. At times the only escape route for them is to repeat unregulated migration so as to quickly as a way of coping:

I have been in South Africa for more than 10 years now. I used to come back when things were fine with me. I lost my employment when my employer relocated to UK. Since then, I have been struggling to get a good job and get to my feet. I find life difficult here in Zimbabwe since I do not have a project to give me money. (Focus Group Discussion, 27/11/21)



Given the above scenarios, it implies that faced with little options, extenuating circumstances of deportees at home will cause them to find solace in circular migration again. Various literature points to this as the self-perpetuating nature of circular migration (Massey and Espinosa, 1997; Constant and Zimmermann, 2011) cited in Constant et al (2012). Thus without proper support unregulated circular migration begets another round of unregulated circular migration. Countries such as Mauritius which have taken regulated circular migration as a developmental tool have often supported their returning residents (Kokil, 2011). Matose (2022) in a study of women migrants from Zimbabwe to Botswana also advocate for the support of women due to the pervasive nature of irregular migration they find themselves in.

CONCLUSION

Not much is known about unregulated circular migration by female labour deportees between Zimbabwe and South Africa, yet it is still an ongoing phenomena. Our study, has shown that there is evidence of unregulated circular irregular migration among the female labour migrants. There are important dynamics and perspectives about the drivers of this migration pattern as well as the lived experiences of these women as the paper has explored.

The main weakness of the study was due to its sensitive nature. In general irregular migration especially by females in the Zimbabwean context is something often disapproved in communities. It becomes even more difficult when it becomes circular in an unregulated form. As such getting the respondents to outpour their experiences during the Focus Group Discussion was not very easy. To circumvent this, it took the experience and skill of the researchers and moderator to get the most useful information for the study from the subjects. Respondents were assured of the strictest of confidence. This study showed an interplay of various factors which trigger recidivism of unregulated circular migration by Zimbabwean female deportees. Attachment with place was found to be common among those deportees who had stayed in South Africa for a long time. Educational qualifications enhanced one's chances of getting employed in South Africa resulting in more chances of repeat migrations. In unregulated circular migration, they are various risks which the female deportees come across. Loss of livelihood at the destination proved to be the main fear for the women than factors such as xenophobia, unemployment among others.



Unregulated circular migration of the female deportees comes with socio-psychological costs on the part of women who partake in it. The study has shown that this is particularly so in situations where by deportees unceremoniously return home with nothing. Being compared alongside some reference group makes them feel alienated. In the process it triggers more repeat migration.

Efficient policies of dealing with unregulated circular migration should therefore be grounded on frameworks which understands first the peculiar needs of women, their vulnerabilities as well as experiences with migration in general. By the end of the day this affects development of society.

The study has also shown how ‘migrants in crisis countries’ such as Zimbabwe are ‘sandwiched’ between tough conditions at destination as well as difficult conditions at the home country. One risk the focus group discussion showed was unemployment at destination. Despite deportation, the female migrants still find themselves tracing their steps back to South Africa because conditions back home still make it difficult to make ends meet.

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**Annexure A****Table 2 : Profile of Migrants Interviewed**

Name Codes	Age	Married (Yes/No)	Education Level	Year of initial migration to South Africa	5 or less years of migration experience	More than 5 years migration experience
Msv1	28	No	Secondary	2016	✓	
Msv2	19	No	Secondary	2020	✓	
Msv3	35	No	Tertiary	2015		✓
Msv4	50	No	Primary	2002		✓
Msv5	47	Yes	Secondary	2005		✓
Msv6	28	No	Secondary	2014		✓
Msv7	43	Yes	Tertiary	2010		✓
Msv8	17	No	Secondary	2021	✓	
Msv9	30	Yes	Secondary	2015		✓
Msv10	26	Yes	Tertiary	2016	✓	
Nem11	23	No	Tertiary	2018	✓	
Nem12	22	Yes	Secondary	2020	✓	
Nem13	24	No	Tertiary	2015		✓
Nem14	45	No	Tertiary	2007		✓
Nem15	33	Yes	Secondary	2010		✓
Nem16	21	No	Secondary	2019	✓	
Nem17	19	Yes	Primary	2021	✓	
Mash18	40	No	Primary	2008		✓
Mash19	28	Yes	Secondary	2013		✓
Mash20	33	No	Secondary	2012		✓

Source: Fieldwork