The Human Security Implications of Migration on Zimbabwean Migrant Women in South Africa

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Abstract

A large number of people enter the South African borders legally and illegally from Zimbabwe in pursuit of secure, better living conditions. Amongst those people are women. This paper argues that most of the women who migrate to South Africa escape from insecurity in Zimbabwe, only to be confronted with other human security challenges in South Africa. The paper presents an overview of the theoretical framework of the human security paradigm, which helps to unpack how the experiences of Zimbabwean migrant women can be labelled as forms of insecurity. Using qualitative data, the paper discusses the possible human insecurity aspects that force the women to leave their home country and the challenges that they encounter in the host country. The findings of the paper indicate that economic insecurity and poverty highly influence the decisions and choices for migration for most of the women. However, the women's expectations of better lives and human security appear to contradict their social experiences. The migrant women face multiple forms of discrimination and violence that are constructed around their identities as women, non-citizens and black Africans. Cumulatively, most of the women experience gender-based violence and discrimination from South African citizens, foregrounded in xenophobic sentiments. Therefore, this paper reaches the conclusion that migrant women are victims of the compounded trauma of insecurities, as many of them would have encountered human insecurity consequences in their home country.

Keywords: Economic insecurity, poverty, identity, livelihood, xenophobia, gender-based violence.

Introduction

The movement of people to other countries has become a way of life in Africa that affects day-to-day activities (Gouws, 2010: 2). Soon after the dawn of

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democracy in South Africa in 1994, there was an increase in the number of people moving to South Africa from other African countries, increasing the trend of South-South migration (Sigsworth et al., 2008: 4; Isike and Isike, 2012: 93). One of the countries is Zimbabwe, which over the past decade has seen a large number of its citizens moving across borders to neighboring states or overseas as a way of escaping protracted political and economic challenges (Bloch 2010; Dzingirai et al., 2015, Crush et al., 2017 b). The twentieth century migration patterns from Zimbabwe to South Africa reflect that young unmarried and married men who were in search of jobs dominated movement, looking for greener pastures in South African farms and mines (Gouws, 2010: 1; Mlambo, 2010; Makina, 2013: 149; Crush et al., 2015: 366). However, the number of women leaving Zimbabwe to South Africa in search of better standards of living also increased rapidly. Statistics produced from the study conducted by Crush et al. (2015: 367-368) highlighted that by the late 1990s migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa was noticeably more varied than anything seen in the past. Women were migrating in significantly higher numbers and they were the breadwinners for their families. Most women in urban Zimbabwe view migration to South Africa as a panacea to the economic-related problems in their family households (Muzvidziwa, 2015: 218; Mutopo, 2010: 466; Jamela, 2013). Therefore, many Zimbabwean women relocate to South Africa in search of better economic opportunities and better standards of living. However, in their journey for economic emancipation and sustainable livelihoods, the women become vulnerable to hostile conditions that are constructed at the intersection of their different identities, particularly, gender identity, race, and their migration status (Sigsworth, 2010; Von Kitzing, 2017; Achiume, 2014; Mutopo, 2010). In South Africa, they are usually seen as an unwanted burden, taking what are often characterized as limited or scarce resources (Crush et al 2017: 2b). Their gender identity as female often exposes them to precarious conditions. This article attempts to contextualize the migration of Zimbabwean women to South Africa, document their experiences prior to and after moving, and establish the human security implications for the women. It presents the view that women migrate to South Africa as an escape from the economic insecurities they face in Zimbabwe, only to be confronted by other human security challenges that include gender-based violence and the recurrent episodes of xenophobic harassment and violence.

Literature Review: Contextualization

The current dispensation of the migrant crises in Europe has been portrayed by the media as one of the worst humanitarian crises since the Second World War. It has enhanced visibility on some structurally embedded issues in the discourse on international migration (forced migration). Salient amongst these issues are "the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, the responsibilities of transit and destination countries, and even more pertinent the rights of migrant women" (Mabera, 2015:15). The term 'migrant women' is regarded as an umbrella term that encapsulates a range of circumstances that speak to the experiences of women on the move. These include different ages, legality (legal resident, undocumented migrants or refugees) or migrating for a number of reasons that can be categorized as either forced or voluntary (Bloch, 2010; Pophiwa, 2014; O'Neil et al., 2016; Muzenda, 2017; Van Heerden, 2017). The latter strengthens the views from Dodson (2002) which note that for some women, migration is viewed as a strategic response to their challenging social, economic, environmental, political or personal circumstances. The movement of most Zimbabweans to other countries can be labelled as an example of survival migration, which can be defined as people who are forced to cross an international border to escape state failure, severe environmental distress, or widespread livelihood collapse. Several scholars posit that a number of Zimbabwean women make the decision to move to a foreign land as a way of responding to household poverty or hardships, linked to the absence of family breadwinners (Crush et al., 2017a: 6; Betts and Kaytaz, 2009).

Zimbabwean migrant women in South Africa are forced to navigate not only a singular crisis at a particular location but also two ongoing crises occurring at the same time. The first crisis involves the political turmoil and the collapse of the economy in Zimbabwe after 2000, which has driven hundreds and thousands of citizens to seek better standards of living and a sustainable livelihood for themselves and their families by migrating to other countries (Crush and Tevera, 2010: 41; Crush et al., 2017b: 6). This crisis has driven people to move to South Africa as it appears to be politically stable, economically strong, and requires lower transaction costs for immigration. However, paradoxically it is far from a safe space for the migrants (particularly women) as most South Africans have over the years responded with prejudice and discrimination towards African migrants and refugees (Bloch, 2010;

Akinola, 2014; Crush and Tawodzera 2017a; Von Kitzing, 2017). Therefore, the other ongoing crisis is xenophobic intolerance and violence against African migrants in which Zimbabwean migrants have become entangled. Zimbabwean migrants who fled the political and desperate economic challenges face the intimidating challenge of looking for jobs to secure a livelihood while they continue to face discrimination, social exclusion, xenophobic harassment, violence and being labelled as the 'other' (Sigsworth et al., 2008; Akinola, 2014; Chinomona and Maziriri, 2015).

Misago et al. (2015: 17) propound that,

> *Xenophobia in South Africa translates into a broad spectrum of behaviors including discriminatory, stereotyping and dehumanizing remarks; discriminatory policies and practices by government and private officials such as exclusion from public services to which target groups are entitled; selective enforcement of by-laws by local authorities; assault and harassment by state agents particularly the police and immigration officials; as well as public threats and violence commonly known as xenophobic violence that often results in massive loss of lives and livelihoods.*

There is no doubt that vulnerability is heightened for Zimbabwean migrant women as they face human insecurity challenges in the form of xenophobia and gender-based violence. The increasing number of women migrating independently means that the vulnerability of women migrants to exploitation, abuse and discrimination also increases (Kawar, 2004: 74). Despite the possible chances of improving their lives and those of their families left behind in Zimbabwe, migration exposes the women to precarious situations and has considerable disadvantages, compared to challenges faced by men (Kawar, 2004: 75; Sigsworth, 2010: 1). While there is no limit to who is affected by the prevalent intolerances and dislike of foreigners in South Africa, scholars like Sigsworth et al. (2008: 1) are of the view that there is a gendered perspective to xenophobia, which is easily overlooked. In the wake of the recurring episodes of violence, "female migrants are unjustifiably affected, not only because the violence is played out on the site of their bodies (through beatings and rape), but also because the violence is directed towards their homes (through burning and looting), which in many cases is symbolic

of a woman's family and is perceived as a place of safety and security" (Sigsworth, 2010: 2). Besides violence, xenophobia also manifests itself in a non-violent manner. As such, research conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) before and after the May 2008 violent attacks in South Africa revealed that foreign women endured xenophobic attitudes from South African nationals in their day-to-day lives (Akinola, 2014). Most women encounter this phenomenon in the public spaces they make use of daily, for instance at work or in public transport (Sigsworth et al., 2008: 26). Women are in double jeopardy and their vulnerability lies at the intersection of the different identities they embody. Being a migrant is not the only condition for their vulnerability, but the fact that they are women exacerbates it. Migrant women are also victims of sexual and gender-based violence.[1] This illuminates the vulnerability of migrant women. While there are significant reports of women being raped emanating from anti-foreign sentiments, in a country where sexual gender-based violence is pervasive, it proves challenging to know whether rapes were instigated by xenophobic attitudes or simply by violent lawlessness (Fuller, 2008: 9; Sigsworth, 2010: 2; Conry, 2015).

Theoretical Framing of the Women's Insecurities within the Human Security Paradigm

The debate about the challenges and insecurities that Zimbabwean migrant women face can be situated within the framework of the human security paradigm. Human security can be defined as safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life (UNDP, 1994). The aftermath of World War 2 in 1945 saw the development of groundbreaking concepts that still guide states in the international system. According to Scheinin (2016: 441), under the principle of universality, the United Nations adopted the UN Charter in 1945. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted as a resolution by the UN General Assembly in 1948. These monumental decisions reiterated the principle that every human being is entitled to inalienable rights

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[1] According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Report of 2014, gender-based violence refers to any harmful act incited on individuals or persons based on their gender. It may include sexual violence, domestic violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage and harmful traditional practices.

and as such addressed the questions of how territorial states should treat their own nationals as well as the nationals from other countries (Bloch, 2010: 234; Scheinin, 2016: 441).

In global discourse, the term 'human security' gained prominence in the 1990s at the end of the Cold War between Russia and the United States of America (USA). The term was officially coined in the 1994 United Nations Development Report and it proffered the definition, which envisaged the protection of all human beings from both physical and non-physical threats (UNDP, 1994). A number of scholars have broadened the definition of human security to encapsulate securing of people, their physical safety, their economic well-being, respect for their dignity and worth as human beings, and the protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms (Evans and Sahnoun, 2001; Chandler, 2004; Tibaijuka, 2005; Dzimiri and Runhare, 2012: 3).

The hypothetical perspective of the human security framework thus informs this study, highlighting the importance of prioritizing individual security which focuses on the different sources of insecurity that affect Zimbabwean migrant women in South Africa. Scholars like Thakur (2003: 5) put forward the view that the threats many people worldwide experience emanate from internal conflicts, disease, hunger, environmental degradation, street crime and domestic violence. These factors underpin the important beliefs of the human security approach. The 1994 UNDP report listed seven dimensions of human security, which included economic security, personal security, food security, health security, political security, community security and environmental security. Isike and Owusu-Ampomah (2017: 3181) posited that, "The human security framework accommodates a wider range of issues that not only constitute threats to human existence, but also breed insecurity and societal anarchy. It views security from the perspective of human well-being and includes broad issues of human concern such as security from poverty, disease, famine, illiteracy, environmental plundering and unemployment, which singly or jointly, contribute to the impairments of human existence". Looking at the migration of Zimbabwean women to South Africa using the lens of the human security framework requires an analysis of the political and socio-economic factors that are seen as 'push' factors from Zimbabwe, as well as an analysis of the conditions in which the women are living in South Africa.

Methodology

The article is based on the results of a qualitative study with Zimbabwean women migrants in Durban, South Africa. The city of Durban has seen an increase in the number of African migrants and refugees moving there, hence it seemed to be a suitable research site for the study. For the purposes of the study, 22 in-depth interviews with Zimbabwean female migrants working as informal traders in Durban Central were undertaken. The ages of the participants ranged from 18-45 years; the women were employed as hairdressers, street vendors, informal tailors and seamstresses and child minders. Purposive sampling was used in selecting some of the participants with prior knowledge of the target group. Snowballing was also used as a sampling technique and it enabled the researcher to locate other possible participants for the study through referrals. A key informant who was part of the target group assisted in some of the referrals. Open-ended interviews and participant observation were used as methods of collecting data. The women determined the places where the interviews were conducted but, in most cases,, they were regularly conducted at their work places. The women were informed of the purposes of the study and they all gave informed consent for the interviews to be used for the research study. They were assured of their confidentiality hence this paper uses pseudonyms. While all the women had a good command of English, the interviews were conducted in their home language, Shona. It enabled them to speak freely and better explain some of their experiences. The major constraint experienced during the study was the personal and emotional sensitivity of some of the issues that were discussed. Some of the women would openly discuss and trivialize issues that bordered on gender-based violence and xenophobia in their own lives. However, in one-on-one interviews, they would not share much about their experiences. This was possibly influenced by the idea that they were aware that they were being audio recorded and the identity of the researcher being Zimbabwean. Hence, some of the women refrained from sharing 'too much' personal information, possibly due to the fear of being judged, so they would give general responses they felt did not reveal too much of their own personal experiences. To analyze the data, all the interviews were transcribed and they were coded by selecting words and sentences that were related to the experiences of the women prior to leaving Zimbabwe and their experiences in South Africa. The

codes were then sorted into themes that sought to answer the research questions relating to the human security conditions of the women before leaving Zimbabwe and in South Africa.

Research Findings

While the narratives included many issues, there were issues that appeared reiterative and were centered on two dominant themes presented below. They include the reason why the women decided to move from Zimbabwe to South Africa, and the experiences of the migrant women trying to integrate into the South African society.

Migration an Escape from Economic Insecurity and Poverty

One of the first questions asked was, what influenced the women to leave Zimbabwe to come to South Africa. Most of the participants indicated that they left Zimbabwe because of the worsening economic situation. This was a salient theme as most of the participants revealed that they decided to migrate from Zimbabwe to emancipate themselves from economic insecurities. Loveness, a 39-year-old woman, working as an informal tailor, spoke about her own reason for leaving Zimbabwe:

> *I came here because of three things, mari, nzara, nhamo chaiyo (money, hunger and poverty, I mean extreme poverty). That kind of poverty that leaves you with nothing to cook for meals made me to leave. When I decided to leave, I left my kids without enough food to sustain them for a long period.*

This narrative corroborates the views of Dzingirai et al (2015) who posit that the main trigger of migration in Zimbabwe appears to be linked with poverty. Following the closure of a number of industries, many people are no longer employed and have been living on less than one US dollar a day (Bracking and Sachikonye, 2006; Raftopoulos, 2001). This pushes them to migrate to neighboring South Africa with the hope of escaping poverty. In the same vein, Lefko-Everett (2010: 269), whose study examined the reasons that drove women to leave Zimbabwe, articulate that economic challenges and insecurity in the form of poverty and unemployment are the main push factors for female Zimbabwean migrants. Human security is intertwined with food security and it is underpinned by the idea that the realization of human rights to adequate

food is essential. The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement (UN, Article 25). However, participants like Loveness revealed that the decision to migrate was influenced by the food insecurities she encountered.

Joyce and Mercy, both young women in their late twenties working as hairdresser and manicurist in one of the salons in inner-city Durban, also shared some of their reasons for moving to South Africa:

> *I came here to South Africa in 2008, when things got difficult. When I left, things were not okay, there were no jobs, most of the companies had shut down and there was a cash crisis. Before I came here, I was involved in buying and selling of different products. However, it was difficult to sustain the business as many did not pay in time because of the cash crisis. I started to plait hair when I came here to South Africa; as it is right now with the little that I can manage to get from my job, I am able to take care of my family back home, as well as take care of my well-being (Joyce).*

> *I am 28 years old and I came to South Africa in 2013 in search of a job because in Zimbabwe I cannot say there was anything tangible that I could do. Even though I was a hairdresser, it was not easy to find clients and people would not pay you after doing your job. You could go for a week, up to three weeks without receiving any money for the job that you would have done already. My sister Eunice was already here, and she encouraged me to move. I* had also *seen when I had previously visited her, how she would get her money instantly as soon as she finished working with a client. It motivated me that is why I came here to South Africa (Mercy).*

The above narratives demystify the assumption that all women leave Zimbabwe for South Africa out of extreme desperation and poverty. Instead, some of the women had jobs but they viewed South Africa as having better employment prospects. Some women make the decision to migrate from Zimbabwe to South Africa as a response to the protracted prevalence of the economic insecurities in their country. The participants revealed that life in

Zimbabwe was becoming unbearable and it was becoming difficult to maintain a sustainable livelihood and well-being. The shrinking economy, soaring inflation, widespread shortages of food and basic amenities, and unemployment proved to be a powerful force driving most participants to leave Zimbabwe (Crush and Tevera, 2010: 1). Many of the women also revealed that their main goal was to secure employment as the economic insecurities in Zimbabwe influenced the existence of high job shortages. The likelihood of at least having an employment opportunity in South Africa and earning an income influenced the women to migrate. Because of South Africa's fairly stable political and economic situation, the women perceived that life would be better in South Africa, with the abundance of jobs and better living conditions (Crush et al., 2017b: 3). One of the women, Tendai, a 30-year-old hairdresser, said:

> *Kumba kwaiva kusina chekuita (back home, there was nothing that I could do to sustain myself), with no jobs. And you will be thinking that maybe if I go there, things will be better, and I can find a job.*

Eunice, a 37-year-old woman, said:

> *The reason I came from Zimbabwe in 2008 was because of the political situation that the country was facing. Our government was not in an amicable state, everything was not okay. And when I decided to come here, my main intention was to come and work so that I could support my family. Back home I used to be a hairdresser, but because of the economic situation which affected the cash flow, we were no longer getting customers.*

It is undeniable that the need to construct a secure and sustainable livelihood through gainful employment in other countries is an important driver of migration for most of the participants. Based on the drivers of migration from Zimbabwe, a number of scholarly work labels Zimbabwean migrants as 'economic migrants' who leave in search for better economic opportunities for their well-being and that of their families left behind (Bloch, 2010; Makina, 2012; Crush et al., 2015; Dzingirai et al., 2015; Hlatshwayo, 2019). The challenges that the women encounter intricately link to different ranges of human security consequences, which border on political, food and economic security. The ongoing changes in the Zimbabwean political economy are an

economic limitation that hinders most of the women from reaching their full potential as they find it difficult, if not impossible, to make a living. The memories the women have about the economic crisis in Zimbabwe are constructed around their everyday experiences of the scarcity of basic commodities like flour, maize meal, sugar and cooking oil (Crush and Tevera 2010; Dzingirai et al., 2015:16; Mcduff, 2015). As the women spoke of their experiences, one could sense their confusion about the degree of poverty affecting their country, which used to be regarded as the bread-basket of Africa. Some of the women have vivid memories of how it became difficult to find employment. These experiences reveal how the women's lives shifted to not having any options to sustain their livelihoods, leading them to migrate to South Africa. The move to South Africa seems to have been influenced by the idea that one would be able to secure a sustainable job as soon as one reached one's destination. For most of the women, they left for South Africa from Zimbabwe with the perception that South Africa had many sustainable job opportunities. While the women aim to ensure economic security for their families through the provision of basic needs and food, one of those basic needs is quality education. Veronica and Hildah said:

> *I came here to South Africa in 2009, and my main intention was kuzotsvaga mari ye vana vechikoro (to raise school fees money for my kids) (Veronica).*

> *I came from Zimbabwe in 2007. The economic crisis was too bad for us, mabasa kwainge kusina (there were no jobs), everything was so difficult, especially for me, I had children, the educational system became very weak, teachers were no longer coming to class. The conditions were just deteriorating, and I decided to come to South Africa (Hildah).*

The political and economic challenges aggravated some human security concerns, which included the provision of sustainable quality education for the citizens. It influenced the inability to pay school fees by guardians, which contributed to poor educational systems. Some women like Veronica left Zimbabwe for South Africa with the hopes of securing enough money to send home to ensure a sustainable well-being and a good education. Prior to migrating, most of the women anticipated to find better opportunities that could enable them to send remittances and take care of their families back in

Zimbabwe (Bloch, 2005; Makina, 2012)[2]. Under economic security, the human security concept notes that every child has the right to social safety, education and vocational training (Isike and Owusu- Ampomah, 2017: 3181). However, the women's narratives reveal that this privilege is compromised by the political situation in Zimbabwe, increasing the human security consequences for the women and their children.

Experiences of Zimbabwean Migrant Women in South Africa

The women's expectations of better lives and human security appear to be in contrast with their social experiences. Zimbabwean migrant women face multiple forms of discrimination and violence that are constructed around structures like their identity as women, non-citizens, black Africans and poverty-stricken (Hlatshwayo, 2019: 168). Cumulatively, most of the women revealed that they experienced gender-based violence and discrimination from South African citizens foregrounded in xenophobic sentiments. One of the negative experiences that the women revealed was the prevalence of gender-based violence in the form of intimate partner violence. This was reflected in Joyce's narrative. She explained that she was a victim of intimate partner violence from a local South African man with whom she was in a relationship. She was a victim of gender-based violence and her vulnerability was constructed around the idea that her partner felt entitled to her, as he was the one who had a bigger role to play in ensuring a sustainable livelihood and security in South Africa. She stated:

> *Taidanana, but the problem was that aigara achingondirova (we were so much in love, but the problem was that he would frequently beat me). He was so possessive, and he would not even want to see me speaking with other males. He somehow had the belief that he had made me the person that I was at that time. We did all the formal introductions, what was only left for us was to travel to Zimbabwe so that he could pay the bride price. After much thought, I called off the negotiations because I really thought hard of how my future would be with someone who always degraded and abused me. The previous weekend before*

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[2] In a study carried out by Bloch (2005), the sample indicated that 85% of Zimbabwean migrants sent remittances to their relatives and families in Zimbabwe.

> *the breakup he had beat me up so badly because I had decided to go out with my friends and not him. After that night, I told myself that (hwaisava hupenyu) I was not going to live like this for the rest of my life and I would not put myself in prison (Joyce).*

Although the experiences of migrant and non-migrant women regarding intimate partner violence appear to be similar, what increases the vulnerability of migrant women is their immigrant status. This status is shaped by different factors, which include immigration policies that exclude and limit their access to some basic services. The other factor is staying in South Africa illegally which intensifies the women's dependency on the perpetrators and in most cases restrains the women's options to respond to their insecurity in the form of gender-based violence (Kiwanuka, 2010). As Joyce continued to narrate her story she shared that, at that time she was not legally documented in South Africa and at some point she envisioned herself with a South African identity book and citizenship which she hoped would bring more security for her livelihood. This reveals that some Zimbabwean migrant women have relationships with local South African men with the anticipation of marriage, which could eventually lead to attaining South African citizenship. Their compromised agency, worsened by financial insecurities and in most cases, structural factors like legality, position migrant women as victims of xenophobic gender-based attacks. This, in turn, compromises their personal well-being and security. The misconception of migrants as the 'other', criminal and undeserving of protection, affects various migrants differently, but migrant women are mostly affected and more vulnerable (Von Kitzing, 2017:8).

The excitement and anticipation for better jobs, opportunities, and economic and social security is easily shadowed by their lived realities as they are viewed as the 'other' and are exposed to a range of insecurities in South Africa. The women who were interviewed for this study revealed that it was difficult to experience the security and the life-changing opportunities they imagined they would encounter in South Africa (Kihato, 2009; Dodson, 2010; Chinomona and Maziriri, 2015; Crush et al., 2015; Dzingirai et al., 2015). Living conditions are often difficult and with most of the participants being involved in informal trading, they struggle to make ends meet. A visit to one of the women's homes revealed that some of the migrant women reside in dilapidated, overcrowded and poorly maintained blocks of flats where the rooms are usually divided with

cardboard boxes and there is poor sanitation. These conditions, coupled with a significant percentage of the women being undocumented, heighten their vulnerabilities. The study revealed that women are not only susceptible outside, but also within their homes. Women remain in abusive relationships as a way of ensuring that they have access to basic goods, such as shelter, clothing and food. Their relationships, with both foreign and local men, are influenced by their need to depend on someone who they feel can provide for and take care of them. However, this leads to the women normalizing intimate partner violence and viewing it as tolerable.

Vivian, a 37-year-old Zimbabwean woman who lives in inner-city Durban and operates an informal children's daycare center, revealed that she is accustomed to her partner abusing her, but she is dependent on him. It is important to note that they are both foreign (the partner is Nigerian) which sheds more light on the fact that local men are not the only ones who perpetuate gender-based violence and abuse.

> *My Nigerian boyfriend is not always nice to me, especially when he is frustrated, he can even beat me up… I just tell myself that it is part of life, no relationship has got no issues…. He gives me good money' (Vivian).*

The continued presence of economic insecurity in the lives of the women (not being able to buy basic foodstuffs to support their livelihoods) is also linked to their own personal well-being and security being compromised. It influences migrant women to normalize human insecurity red flags like the existence of gender-based violence and domestic violence (Von Kitzing, 2017; Hlatshwayo, 2019). The proponents of the human security concept assert that security also involves personal security, which includes safety from violent crime, all forms of physical abuse, rape, and gender-based violence on sexual orientation (Isike and Awusu-Ampomah, 2017; Dzimiri and Runhare, 2012). Therefore, one is inclined to argue that Zimbabwean migrant women turn a blind eye to their personal security hoping to attain economic security and sustain their livelihoods in a foreign land.

Trivializing Sexual Violence towards Migrant Women

Gender-based violence can also be expressed in the form of sexual violence and harassment. Some of the participants felt that both local and migrant men sometimes behave like sexual predators, who feel entitled to expressing sexual innuendos and, in most cases, belittle the existence of sexual harassment. It appears that some men do not see any harm in sexually violating women as they are socially conditioned to believe that it is normal and acceptable for a man to touch women inappropriately without their consent. They see nothing wrong in their actions, operating from a position of entitlement and believe that it is normal for men to extend and impose such behavior on women. This is strengthened by what Eunice said:

> *The one thing I understand about males when it concerns women is that if they are attracted to you, they can even do the unthinkable, anokwanisa kungosvika, okubata kana maprivate parts, (they can even just touch your private parts). It does not matter whether you are foreign or what, because I once encountered it.*

The above narrative shows that both migrant women and local South African women can fall victim to sexual violence and harassment. Therefore, this paper purports that the sexual harassment of migrant women by local South African men can be considered xenophobic, premised on the assumption and perception that migrant women would not expect these kinds of sexual advances from random unknown men in the streets. The fact that most migrant women have less protection than South African women who can easily seek recourse from the relevant authorities, increases their vulnerability to xenophobia (CSVR, 2016). According to Von Kitzing (2017: 12), most migrant women do not report cases of sexual harassment and abuse to the relevant authorities. This positions migrant women as vulnerable, and any sexual harassment towards them can be labelled as xenophobic and acknowledged as a form of insecurity. This connotes that for the migrant women, human insecurity concerns are exacerbated by their inability to seek recourse influenced by their identity. One key guiding principle of the human security paradigm outlines how important the security of an individual is. However, the latter narrative reveals that human security concerns are easily influenced and compromised by structures such as identity. The fact that the women are 'migrants' plays a huge part in downplaying their access to basic

human rights like reporting gender-based violence cases to the relevant authorities.

The Concepts of Identity and Security

Sigsworth et al. (2008) posited that traditionally, women are the bearers of culture. However, the concept of identity and belonging is one issue that has become a distinctly gendered problem for foreign women. Some of the women who were interviewed expressed the concern that clinging to the aspects of one's identity renders them more vulnerable to xenophobic violence. It is worsened by the other identity of being a woman. This is reflected in the narrative given by Charity:

> *It becomes worse when you cannot speak isiZulu. At times when you become resilient shouting back using the local language the perpetrators become apologetic. However, once you speak English and they pick up that you are not a local, they will take away everything from you, especially us, women, it's like they will be preying on us more.*

While Charity is aware of stories of men being mugged, she believes women are easy targets and that perpetrators take advantage when they notice that one is not local. While most tragedies appear to be general crimes, foreignness makes many women more vulnerable. Zimbabwean migrant women are often noticeable through several characteristics that distinguish them from the local South African population, hence, they are more prone to being exploited and being affected by xenophobia. Sigsworth et al. (2008: 17) referred to these different characteristics as 'markers of difference'. These visible aspects include the language that Zimbabwean migrant women speak, their accents when they speak English or when they attempt to speak the local language, as well as their clothing. This is consistent with the study by Lefko-Everett (2010: 280) which established that some Zimbabwean women changed their style of dressing to avoid being noticed.

The women who were interviewed revealed that they migrated to South Africa in search of an 'economic haven' away from the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. However, their experiences of South Africa portray feelings of powerlessness and insecurity. They live in constant fear of what

they might come across daily. Because of their differences, they are often labelled with the derogatory term *Kwere Kwere,* which is usually used by locals when referring to foreign nationals*.* While the idea of xenophobia is generally associated with bodily harm and physical violence against migrant women, xenophobia can be exhibited in a subtle manner through verbal abuse. Participants revealed that during their stay in South Africa they had encountered at least one incident of verbal abuse in the public transport they use daily. The relentless name-calling appears to be a source of hurt, humiliation and insecurity for many Zimbabwean migrant women. It increases their feelings of being socially excluded and insecurity in a country where they believed social integration and security would be easy to attain (Lefko-Everett, 2010: 208).

Although there are several scholars (Chireka, 2015; Dodson 2010; Crush and Tawodzerwa, 2017b) who have published work pertaining to the challenges that Zimbabwean migrant women encounter in South Africa, very few addresses how the concept of human security can be included in the discourse of female migration, xenophobia and gender-based violence. While violence against women and the rights of women are integral to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the sad reality is that during xenophobic conflict, women are always caught in the middle. As established by Fuller (2008: 8), migrant women are inevitably placed in a position of double jeopardy because of their identity as women and as migrants or outsiders. However, the anti-migrant hostility and the incidents of gender-based violence they encounter, go unreported because of the women's fear to face hostility from police or possibly the general feeling of not wanting to cause unnecessary trouble premised on their social position as outsiders in another person's territory (Fuller, 2008; Sigsworth et al., 2008; Charman et al., 2012). Scholars like Waiganjo (2017: 39) have proposed that the xenophobic sentiments in South Africa have affected several migrant women through violence that is incited on their bodies through sexual assault, emotional abuse and beatings. Waiganjo (2017) further noted that the violence that migrant women encounter, whether emotional or physical, is embedded in patriarchal structures that exist within cultures that strengthen gender inequality, revealed in ideas, attitudes and practices that are expressed during war and conflict. Hence, African scholars like Mama and Okazawa-Rey (2012) have noted that during war and

conflict, atrocious acts of human insecurity against women are often used as a weapon of violence.

The prevalence of the moral ills of society such as gender-based violence and xenophobic conflicts in the spaces they live and work make it difficult for most of the women to feel safe and be easily integrated into society. The violent cycle of gender-based violence, coupled with the protracted existence of xenophobia, renders migrant females insecure and vulnerable. In fact, scholars like Von Kitzing (2017: 1) maintained that "the intersectionality[3] of their 'illegality' and womanhood highlight their particular vulnerability and showcase the fluidity of xenophobic and gender-based violence". This alternatively jeopardizes their security, and in many ways speaks to the fact that civil society has not yet reached a position where they can fully consolidate the human security of migrant women in South Africa.

Conclusion

Going beyond the discussed themes, the women's daily experiences are premised on their multiple identities. Although the experiences of the women are specifically tied to their identity as migrants, it cannot be denied that some of their experiences, such as intimate partner violence, are like those of the local South African women. The changing aspects of their class, gender and nationality certainly construct their experiences, but they share many experiences with other women. Therefore, the experiences of the Zimbabwean migrant women inform us of the broader experience of being women (a vulnerable and marginalized group) in South Africa. Kihato (2009: 187) noted that, "migrant women certainly share class, gendered and 'outsider' characteristics with others, including categories of women of South African origin". For instance, most of the challenges and questions about safety, domestic violence and the insensitive reaction of the police to gender-based violence, reverberate with many of the experiences of local South African women. However, these experiences are more likely to be intensified when it comes to migrant women who are even more susceptible due to their migrant

[3] The concept of intersectionality was coined by the scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). The concept puts forward the idea that various social identities like race, gender, class and sexuality usually interlock with each other to influence the different world-views and experiences that individuals have.

status. To combat the experiences of human insecurity that migrant women encounter, it is essential to start from the grassroots, tackling issues that affect local women in South Africa as well.

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