

## **A Study of the Effects of Zimbabwean Youth Migration on Musina Area, South Africa**

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**Abstract:** Youth migration has always been part of human history. Musina area, like many other border areas, experiences a variety of challenges as a result of the influx of young people from the neighboring Zimbabwe and other African countries. Of great concern about this migration is the fact that the host country or area may become unsafe and unstable as a result of huge influx of migrants. There may also be tensions between local people and migrants over the resources. The study sought to investigate the effects of the Zimbabwean youth migration on Musina area. The study was undertaken in Musina area which is situated 18 km from the Beit-bridge border post. A qualitative research approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Non-probability quota sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The study sample consisted of 16 respondents. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The study found that the effects of the Zimbabwean youth migration on the Musina area include, among others, tensions between locals and the Zimbabwean youth migrants over resources, job and business opportunities, overcrowding and crime. Multi-pronged strategies which involve different stakeholders should be applied to address tensions over job and business opportunities, overcrowding and crime in the Musina area.

**Key words:** Host country, effects, migration, Musina, youth, Zimbabwe

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Youth migration is a persistent phenomenon globally, since young people are recognized as the most mobile social group around the world (UNESCO., 2013). The number of international migrants continues to increase and is estimated to be around 243 million (UNH., 2016). In Africa there are about 12.7 million international migrants (UNFPA, 2015) and of these the majority are young people (UNH., 2016). In South Africa, the overall estimated population of Foreign migrants is about 2.4 million (Anonymous, 2014) and the majority are young people between the ages of 20-34 (SSA., 2012). In South Africa Zimbabweans it is also believed to be the largest group of foreign migrants estimated to be around 1.5 million (Anonymous, 2014). The migration of Zimbabweans to other countries has been attributed to the land crisis Zimbabwe experienced whereby land was taken away from the European settlers back to the Zimbabwean blacks. This led to high inflation rates, economic collapse and high unemployment rates. Coupled to this from the years 2000 onwards, Zimbabweans from the opposition party, faced political persecutions leading to their fleeing to other countries (Lee, 2003; Oyelana,

2016). Zimbabwean youth migration into South Africa may also be attributed to the economic development of South Africa. According to Oyelana (2016), South Africa has the second best rated economy in Africa, this might be the reason why it attracts many people from other African countries including Zimbabwe.

The movement of young people around the globe is associated with many effects. Migration creates both challenges and opportunities to the achievement of the millennium development goals around the world (UNFPA., 2015). There is need to know about those challenges created by international migration and to develop strategies to solve them in order to achieve the millennium development goals. Youth migration has become a very serious challenge facing the whole world. This is so because youth constitute the largest population group migrating every year. Such challenges range from competition for job opportunities with the country's citizens, unemployment of the citizens and decreased income for citizens. Immigrants reduce wage rates and compete with citizens for jobs thus, increasing the level of domestic unemployment (UNYR., 2013; Ratha *et al.*, 2011). Youth migrants are also more preferred by employers than the citizens, since, they are a source of cheap labor. Such

a situation robs the citizens of employment opportunities and often leads to clashes with the local people. On farms in Musina area, South Africa migrants from Zimbabwe are often accused for working for long hours with little wages because they are undocumented, thus, making them vulnerable to xenophobia and exploitation in the work place (Adepoju, 2008).

Over the years in South Africa, the intolerance of immigrants has increased leading to xenophobic attacks (Thrane, 2013). Due to the increased number of immigrants in South Africa there has been clashes over resources such as employment opportunities between immigrants and the local people especially in Gauteng and Kwazulu Natal provinces (SAGNA., 2015). In South Africa much of the attacks against immigrants are as a result of the frustrations in dealing with the economic challenges facing the country (SAGNA., 2015). Although, these attacks of migrants by South Africans are considered criminal, local people feel that this is the only way that they can protect their resources (Polzer and Takabwirwa, 2010). In addition, youth migrants are believed to be associated with crime though there is not enough evidence to support these claims (Pickering and Ham, 2015). Therefore, there is need for research to find if there are any effects of youth migration on the host country.

**Objective of the study:** The objective of this study is to determine the effects of Zimbabwean youth migration on Musina area.

**Research question:** The research question being addressed is: what are the effects of Zimbabwean youth migration on Musina area, South Africa?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The qualitative research approach was used in this study because it lets the subjects being studied provide better and richer answers to the effects of Zimbabwean youth migration on Musina area. According to Kumar (2014), qualitative is unstructured, open and flexible approach to enquiry aimed to explore diversity rather than quantifying. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, this research method enabled the researcher to probe for more information thus, giving in-depth information to issues that have not been fully explored (Hossain, 2011).

**Research design:** The case study research design was used to guide the research process. Case study research design is an approach to studying a social phenomenon through a thorough analysis of an individual case. The use of a single case can provide insight on the population of interest (Kumar, 2014). In this study, the case study was Musina area.

**Study population and location:** The target population of this study was Musina area residents, different service providers and organizational personnel in Musina. The study was undertaken in Musina area in the Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. It borders South Africa and Zimbabwe. According to the Anonymous (2013), Musina is one of the communities in South Africa with the largest migrant population and people of diverse nationalities. It is the first stop for a large number of Zimbabweans who cross into South Africa seeking protection from persecution and to earn a living to support their families (CoRMSA., 2009).

**Sampling procedure:** The quota sampling procedure was used to select respondents. The population was divided into two categories which are Musina area residents and service providers and organizations in Musina and 8 respondents were selected from each category. The Musina area residents included both South Africans and Zimbabweans. An equal number of males and females were selected.

**Data collection method:** A semi-structured interview was used as the data collection method. With the semi-structured interviews, questions were structured to suit the situation and comments of the respondents who were being interviewed. An interview guide was developed with questions to guide the researcher to ask the respondents the different questions (Vos *et al.*, 2011). The study used interviews because they are flexible and they yield more data as they allowed the researcher to probe for more information according to the responses and they allowed the researcher to change the questions in a way that the respondent understands.

**Data analysis:** According to Vos *et al.* (2011), data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the collected data. This is the process of making meaning out of the data collected during the interviews. The data was analyzed through the use of thematic coding. The researcher went through the responses closely and repeatedly for in-depth understanding. The researcher categorized the data according to themes and analyzed them in order to derive meaning from the data. Thematic analysis was applicable in this study as it enabled the researcher to acquire in-depth information from the responses given.

**Ethical considerations:** Ethics define what is or what is not legitimate to do during a research process (Neumann, 2014). Research ethics help to prevent abuses and assist investigators in understanding their responsibilities as

ethical scholars. The researcher got an ethical clearance letter from the University of Venda's Ethics and Publication Committee which granted permission to conduct the study in Musina area. Musina area authorities were consulted and informed for permission to conduct the research before the researcher collected data. The ethics that the researcher used for the purpose of this research were informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, avoidance of harm and voluntary participation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**The effects of Zimbabwean youth migration on Musina area:** From the total number of the respondents interviewed, 75% of them stated that the Zimbabwean youth migration lead to unfair competition for job opportunities between Zimbabwean youth and the South Africans. The respondents said that the migration of Zimbabwean youth to Musina has led to scarcity of job opportunities in Musina. The South African respondents reacted in the following manner with regard to this issue:

Over the years Musina has become overpopulated with migrants from other countries who are in need of employment which is now scarce in Musina. This is causing vast competition in the labour market (raising the voice). Already, we have a problem of unemployment in our country. Them coming providing cheap labour disadvantages us because the employers end up taking them instead of us (looking disturbed)

The above utterances by the respondents reveal that the influx of young Zimbabwean migrants poses a serious employment challenge for the host country's youth which is already serious unemployment challenges since unemployment rate in South Africa is around 25% (SSA., 2016).

In addition, the study also revealed that there is competition over business opportunities and customers between the Musina local people and the Zimbabwean youth migrants contributing negatively to the growth of businesses owned by locals. Respondent explained it this way:

Some Zimbabwean youth migrants are into the illegal retail activities whereby they just buy and stock in their rooms or walk around selling in low prices to attract customers therefore more customers come to them and do not go to shops owned by the Musina local people

Zimbabweans in business engage in the low profits quick returns therefore they attract more customers. Also because most people who come to shop in Musina are Zimbabweans they lure them into buying for them and not for the Musina local people. This makes the business people in this area frustrated

The above statements highlight that Zimbabwean youth migrants are contributing negatively to the growth of businesses owned by the local people through selling cheaper goods at low profits which is in opposition with the local business people. In addition, the cross border traders are allured by the Zimbabweans youth migrants to come and buy from them, thus, affecting the businesses owned by the South Africans because they cannot get enough customers. This often leads to frustrations on the part of the South Africans.

The majority of the respondents (68.7%) indicated the Zimbabwean youth migration has led to the loss of culture amongst the locals as a result of the influence of the Zimbabwean youth migrants. One respondent said that:

Our young children are growing up surrounded by Zimbabweans ending up learning their culture and they have end up forgetting our own heritage. It's so difficult to determine the culture of Musina because of this mixture. Converging of cultures is causing moral decay in this place. There is the high spread of STIs because of some of the Zimbabweans who work as prostitutes. Our young people are also copying this because they see it as any easy way to make money

The statements highlight that the unhappiness of the South Africans about the presence of Zimbabwean youth migrants. They are not happy because they maintain that the presence of Zimbabwean youth migrants is diluting the cultural values of the South Africans.

Zimbabwean youth migrations also giving rise to the issue of intermarriages between the Zimbabwean youth and Musina area local people. The respondents indicated that they were not happy with the issue of intermarriages between these two groups. They maintain that these inter-marriages are a result of the relationships that developed due to the interactions between the Zimbabwean youth migrants and the South African young women. These relationships often lead to exploitation of the young people in Musina. To express his concern, some respondent said that:

Zimbabwean youth are marrying some of our young women some out of real love and affection but some in order for them to get documentation and a place to stay. These people from across the border take our women by flashing money out making women love them after their stay they just leave these women and go which is extremely unacceptable because they are playing with the feelings of these women

The above statements highlights the discontent of some South Africans as a result of the inter-marriages between Zimbabwean youth migrants and South African young women. The unhappy South Africans argue that Zimbabwean youth migrants take advantage of the young South Africans by marrying them in order to get permanent residence permits. They think that these inter-marriages are not as result of love but the Zimbabwean youth migrant's tactics to get an opportunity to settle in South African at the expense of the South African young women. According to Adepoju (2006), immigrants are often accused by the local people of exploiting South African girls by merely marrying them to get residence permits. It is argued that it is difficult to really determine those who are genuine.

The data collected demonstrated that Zimbabwean youth migration has a negative effect on the safety and security of Musina area. The respondents stated that crime in Musina area is one of the effects of Zimbabwean youth migration, although it is not as bad as in other areas. Captured as follows by a respondent from the South African Police Services (SAPS):

The level of crime in this area is not very serious compared to other areas. We do not experience a lot of serious crimes like murder, rape and car hijacking. Though this is the case, we cannot ignore the fact that over the past years there has been an increase in the incidences of theft due to the young people from our neighbouring country. As some are not employed, they steal small things like food and money just to survive for that moment. Generally, the Musina area is one of the safe places with immigrants in our country

The statement made by the SAPS does not paint a very bad picture concerning crime committed by the Zimbabwean youth migrants. However, the SAPS still have concern over minor crimes committed by the Zimbabwean youth migrants. It must be noted that the

Zimbabwean youth migrants contribute to an increased crime rate in the Musina area. This has further compromised safety and security in Musina area. The SAPS associate this increased levels of crime in Musina area to the high levels of unemployment in the area.

The statement made by some local residents of Musina (56.3%) also corroborates the concern expressed by the police regarding crime committed by the Zimbabwean youth migrants. Also, residents blame the increase in crime levels in the area to the presence of the Zimbabwean youth migrants. They argue that the unemployed Zimbabwean youth migrants commit crime in order to meet their basic needs. These sentiments are captured in the following utterances made by the Musina residents:

In the towns and residential areas there is a lot of theft and burglary where by the migrants break into people's houses, cars and shops to steal. You have to be careful all the times in this place because the Zimbabweans steal from us. If you leave your purse or cell phone in the car they break the windows and take it. They break into houses sometimes when the see an opportunity

The above statements show that most of the crime committed in the Musina area involves mostly burglary. Furthermore, residents stress lack of safety and security due to the crime often committed by Zimbabwean youth migrants. This correlates to the findings by Crush (2008) that South African residents believe that people from the other countries enter the country to commit crime. The finding that Zimbabwean youth migration increases crime in Musina area also validates the claim that youth migrants are associated with crime (Pickerings and Ham, 2015).

With regards to the effects of Zimbabwean youth migration on human settlement in the Musina area, the majority of the respondents (87.5%) pointed out that there is overcrowding in most of the locations in Musina. This overcrowding is mostly attributed to due to the influx of Zimbabwean youth migrants into the area. As a result, the area is so densely populated that in some instances there are two or more families staying in one house as stated:

The town is congested and if you check the way people are living you will be amazed. In one house you can find two or more families. The migrants pay rent therefore the landlord accommodate many people in their houses to make money but these living conditions are bad

These statements confirm that the influx of migrants is causing overcrowding in the Musina area especially in houses. This is very critical since the housing infrastructure in the area is not being developed to accommodate the influx of migrants into to the area. In addition, the landlords in the area see the presence of Zimbabwean youth migrants as an opportunity to make business. They take advantage of the desperate need for accommodation by the Zimbabwean youth migrants. People end up living in unhealthy and overcrowded conditions in the area. This worsens the health problems in the area. Overcrowding of the Musina area by the Zimbabwean migrants is placing a strain on the area. The erection of many shelters with no proper ablution facilities is also a health hazard as indicated below by some of the respondents:

There are some unhygienic houses without even water in the toilets. Due to the high demand of housing infrastructure by Zimbabweans, landlords just do a quick job by building their houses without toilets or water with a motive of getting money from tenants. This is leading to some diseases

The above statement indicates that as a result of the influx of migrants, greedy landlords who take advantage of the shortage of proper housing facilities build shelters without proper sanitation facilities. The greedy landlords rush to put desperate migrants in their houses without making sure that they are habitable. This in turn puts the residents at a risk of contracting diseases. More than half of the respondents (56.3%) explained that:

As more youth from Zimbabwe are coming, there is competition over housing facilities. This gives rise to the emergence of informal houses like shacks commonly known as 'mukhukus'. Some of the young Zimbabweans opt to stay in these shacks because they cannot afford to pay rent for proper houses with the little wages they get

The mushrooming of shacks all over the Musina area is also compromising town planning and landscaping in the area. Overcrowding and lack of proper settlement of people and planning and the building of appropriate facilities lead to many health and safety and security risks in the Musina area. One of the effects of overcrowding in the Musina area is highlighted in the following statement by one of the respondents.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concluded that Zimbabwean youth migration had a negative effect on Musina area. Most respondents indicated that Zimbabwean youth migration brought about competition over jobs and business opportunities between locals and Zimbabwean youth migrants, overcrowding and crime in the Musina area. The study also indicated that there is moral decay and frustrations by Musina area local people as a result of intermarriages between Zimbabwean youth and Musina local people. As a result of all these challenges, there are tensions between the locals and Zimbabwean youth. Such a situation has resulted in the area being unsafe and unstable. Subsequently, insecurity and instability hampers the effective functioning and development of the area.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The situation brought about the Zimbabwean youth migrants calls for a multi-pronged strategy to address all the challenges faced by Zimbabwean young migrants and local people in the Musina area. The bilateral agreements between South African and Zimbabwean governments should be used to facilitate collaboration between the two countries in handling the challenges of Zimbabwean youth migration. There is also need for a collaborative effort by government, political and community leaders as well as other relevant stakeholders to work out strategies to address the identified challenges caused by the Zimbabwean youth migration on the Musina area. Policies targeting youth migration should be improved to ensure that they are effective in addressing effects of migration in Musina area. The government should ensure that youth migrants working in South Africa are covered by Act No. 16 of 2014: Labour Relations Amendment Act 2014 to protect them against exploitation and abuse by employers. This will also help to manage unfair competition because both the locals and foreign nationals will be employed on the same terms. There should be strict guarding of the border fence and serious fight against corruption by immigration officers in order curb the influx of undocumented immigrants into South Africa. Government should improve housing, infrastructure and other services in the Musina area in order to address the effects of overcrowding caused by the Zimbabwean youth migration.

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