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TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION AND RECONFIGURATION OF THE FAMILY IN ZIMBABWE

Migração Transnacional e Reconfiguração da Família no Zimbábue

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Abstract. The unprecedented transnational migration ensuing from the economic crisis in Zimbabwe has sociocultural impacts on both migrant and non-migrant family members. This article, which draws from qualitative research with migrants and non-migrants, discusses how migration upsets cultural configurations of the family in terms of marriage, parenthood, childhood, the gender and age division of labor, and family relations. Transnational migration has destabilized traditional family structures by creating relations and gender roles that challenge cultural and social values relating to both the nuclear and extended families. Transnational migration has also transformed the family's place in the migrant's life and vice versa in ways that deviate from the cultural norm.

Keywords: transnational migration; family; transformation; gender; Zimbabwe

Resumo. *A migração transnacional sem precedentes resultante da crise econômica no Zimbábue tem impactos socioculturais tanto em membros da família migrantes como não migrantes. Este artigo, que se baseia em pesquisas qualitativas com migrantes e não migrantes, discute como a migração perturba as configurações culturais da família em termos de casamento, paternidade, infância, divisão do trabalho por sexo e idade, e relações familiares. A migração transnacional desestabilizou as estruturas familiares tradicionais ao criar relações e papéis de gênero que desafiam os valores culturais e sociais relacionados tanto com as famílias nucleares como com as famílias alargadas. A migração transnacional também transformou o lugar da família na vida do migrante e vice-versa, de formas que se desviam da norma cultural.*

Palavras-chave*: migração transnacional; família; transformação; gênero; Zimbábue*

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Introduction

The traditional family in Zimbabwe, which underwent transformation due to colonialism, Christianization, and Western education, has experienced further transformation in the last two decades due to transnational migration induced by the economic crisis that has ravaged the country since the turn of the twenty-first century. This article moves beyond transnational migration's economic impact on the family through remittances and specifically discusses its sociocultural impacts on marriage, gender roles, parenthood, childhood, and extended family relations. Due to migration, new arrangements that deviate from the traditional configuration of the family and kinship structure have emerged in Zimbabwe. Transnational migration has altered both extended and nuclear families by reorganizing roles and relations in response to the absence of some members of the family. The onset of the economic crisis at the turn of the twenty-first century generated a steady stream of emigration out of Zimbabwe. Over the years, this emigration has created a gulf between traditional family norms on the one hand and the arrangements that migration necessitates on the other hand. The traditional family configuration epitomized by co-residence of spouses and their dependent children and the gender and age division of labor in the family unit is increasingly becoming an ideal beyond many migrants and their non-migrant family members' capacity to conform to. This article utilizes data on family life and gender roles and relations drawn from qualitative research with Zimbabwean migrants conducted in Germany in 2005 and in South Africa in 2014. Ten women and nine men participated in the research in Germany while ten women and ten men were interviewed in South Africa. These two research projects were complemented by research in 2021 with non-migrants in Zimbabwe involving thirty-two men and thirty women. The article links the findings from the three research projects to other studies on migration and parenting and thus contributes to existing literature on this topic.

The Family in Zimbabwean Cultures

The family in traditional Zimbabwean cultures transcends the nuclear unit to embrace a large group of people who share maternal and paternal descent. Totemic affiliation, which is central to traditional kinship structure and social organization, creates family bonds among people who identify as members of the same clan or who trace their descent to common ancestry. Blood relationships, which are traced as far back in genealogical history as the living can remember, create a vast network of people who consider themselves family. These extended family relationships are not about mere acknowledgement of blood ties. Rather, they emphasize mutual social and economic obligations

captured in the Shona[1] proverb *ukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya* (blood relationships are incomplete without sharing of food). This creates a system of mutual obligations, expectations, and dependence among people bound together by kinship. The sense of community fostered by such a kinship system ensures that the individual has a network of people providing economic, social, and emotional support in time of need. In this context, the individual is inextricably linked to their family – a word, which encompasses a vast network of people who claim the same ancestry and totem. The sense of security that mutual support and obligation nurture between the individual and the family is extended to the relationship between the individual and the community captured by the African philosophical tradition of "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969, p. 141). Explaining this tradition, Hord and Lee (1995, p. 8) note, "If the individual identity is grounded in social interaction, in the life of the community, then that individual's good life is inseparable from the successful functioning of his or her society".

In line with this philosophy, kinship structures in traditional Zimbabwean cultures revolve around a system of proxies within the family which means that everyone has a substitute who can play their role if they cannot do so themselves for any reason. The system of familial proxies which is organized around age or generation and gender means that there are proxy grandmothers, grandfathers, fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters as the situation may require (see Bourdillon, 1987; Holleman, 1952). In this kinship structure, children can be orphans in the biological but not in the social sense of the word. Lineage sons from the father's family of birth are proxy fathers who play an even more active role after the death of their brother. Correspondingly, lineage daughters from the mother's natal family are proxy mothers who are expected to stand in for their deceased sister and treat her children as their own. In the absence of their brothers, sisters play the role of female fathers to their brothers' children and the social and economic but not sexual role of a husband to their sisters-in-law. Similarly, mother's brother is a male mother although the social roles of a mother are assigned to mother's sister so that the maternal uncle can have a relaxed and playful relationship with his nephews and nieces (see Radcliffe-Brown, 1940). The breadth of traditional kinship structures in Zimbabwe ensures that everyone has someone to turn to such that even an individual born as an only child finds siblings in their cousins. This ensures continuity in the absence of specific members of the family as their roles are easily transferred to people appropriately positioned to assume them in the kinship system. How has this system fared under migration and the dispersal of family members that it entails?

[1] The most widely spoken local language in Zimbabwe.

Migration and the Family in Historical and Contemporary Contexts

Rural-urban migration, wage employment, Western education, and conversion to Christianity in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) dispersed, strained, and weakened the extended family by providing new forms of individual autonomy, new allegiances, and new sources of knowledge and wisdom all of which supplanted gerontocracy or rule by the elders (Jaji, 2021). The mobility that all these factors facilitated created physical, social, and economic distance among family members and, in the process, weakened the social cohesion which had hitherto characterized the extended family. A new configuration based on an individualized reality emerged as people migrated and lived far away from people with whom they had had an inextricable family bond. While families had lived in physical and social proximity, usually in one village or in contiguous villages, colonial era migration pushed apart family members as some relocated to the nascent urban centers, farms, and mines. Some returned to their rural homes after retirement while others established new homes elsewhere altogether.

Western education enabled young African men to move from their villages, find employment, earn incomes and, in the process, loosen the hold that the elders had previously had on them (Bourdillon, 1987; Grier, 2006). Social organization based on gerontocracy had traditionally functioned without much resistance because young men depended on the elders for land and bride wealth (Grier, 2006). The elders similarly lost control over young women some of whom ran away from the villages in order to escape arranged marriages, widow inheritance, and marital abuse among others (Mhike, 2012). Considerable numbers of these women fled to mission stations where they received training in home economics and professions such as teaching and nursing (see Barnes, Win, 1992; Jeater, 1993; Schmidt, 1992; Thomas, 2000; White, 1990). These opportunities enabled most of the women to move to the burgeoning urban centers and use the distance from their villages to shape their own destinies especially concerning property ownership and the choice of suitors and marriage.

The colonial ideology's negative attitude towards African cultures left limited space for the extended family to thrive in the new moral frame of reference. The introduction of Christianity and Western education, which denigrated indigenous knowledge and institutions, as well as employment in a monetized economy all channeled young people's loyalties in new directions presented by the colonial political economy (Jaji, 2021). This historical transformation and the individualism that it fostered left the family ill-adapted to new challenges such as those that have arisen from contemporary transnational migration in terms of age and gender roles and relations within the family. As in colonial era migration, contemporary migration has enabled young people to acquire

resources and, against the backdrop of economic difficulties in Zimbabwe, play a crucial role in decision-making and the family's access to resources. Current transnational migration has further eroded gerontocracy; older men once again defer to migrant young men and women who send remittances especially on decisions relating to how these remittances are to be used (Jaji, 2016). Migration thus continues to chip at traditional kinship hierarchies as migrant young women and men convert their incomes into social capital, which they deploy in family settings.

For migrant women, improved economic status has varied outcomes. In some cases, it does not necessarily translate into a corresponding higher social status because power dynamics between couples may remain unchanged in societies where the patriarchal ideology determines gender relations (Lam, Yeoh, 2018; Parreñas, 2001). For example, Angela, who assisted her husband to migrate to South Africa and provided for him and their five children, explained that he beat her. In other cases, women can acquire decision-making power especially on use of remittances, which can shape power relations within marriage and the extended family at large (Jaji, 2016). Joy who paid for her brother's upkeep and tertiary education was able to influence his professional choices although he was an adult. In another case, Mary, who had joined her husband in Germany, refused to return to Zimbabwe with him when he decided to do so and remained in Germany with her daughter. Mary, who had a well-paying job, enjoyed economic independence from her husband and made financial decisions without his approval. The shift in power relations between spouses demonstrates that the privilege that patriarchy bestows on men in Zimbabwean cultures is contingent upon fulfilment of the obligations designated as male. Patriarchy in Zimbabwean cultures accommodates and even extols ambitious, independent, and successful women through terminologies that "elevate" such women to the social status of men (see Jaji, 2016). Migration thus provides an alternative channel for young women and men to subvert gerontocracy and gender hierarchies on patriarchy's own terms that premise respect and privilege on the capacity to fulfil specific responsibilities. Resource-endowed young people, regardless of gender, are thus able make decisions on funerals and weddings among other family occasions that require money. Traditionally, these decisions were the elders' prerogative.

Migration, Marriage, and Subversion of the Gender Role Norm

Migration has varied consequences for married couples who migrate together and those where one spouse migrates and the other stays behind. In some families, the migrant spouse, once settled in the destination country, brings over the other spouse and the children under family reunion as exemplified by Angela referred to above. In others, family reunion does not happen because of

various reasons such as inability to fulfil immigration requirements considering that many destination countries particularly in the global North discourage family reunions and have come up with stringent immigration policies intended to curb what they see as influxes of economic migrants and refugees (Fresnoza-Flot, 2015). Either or both spouses can also decide against family reunion where they do not want to uproot their children from a familiar sociocultural environment and educational system or where one spouse sees migration as a solution to an unhappy marriage without going through divorce (Kufakurinani, 2013).

Varied as the reasons may be, migration by one spouse has created situations in which couples live apart in different countries for long periods of time and sometimes indefinitely. Such situations, exemplified by Mary above, force marriage to shed off its quintessential characteristics such as co-residence and sexual intimacy for the period that the migrant spouse is away. Uncoupling of marriage and co-residence has created long-distance, asexual marriages that, in some cases, have culminated in infidelity, estrangement, bigamy, divorce, and the concomitant increase in the number of remarriages and single parent families in Zimbabwe. Infidelity can be on the part of either the migrant or the left-behind spouse (Kufakurinani, 2013). Both spouses can also have extramarital relationships especially where they do not see each other for prolonged periods. The absence of one spouse for extended periods has exacerbated suspicion and mistrust even without tangible evidence of infidelity leading to marriages breaking down (Kufakurinani, 2013).

The sustained erosion of the extended family's influence dating back to the colonial era has reduced its capacity to maintain its traditional role in conflict resolution between spouses especially where couples interpret its mediation as meddling and eschew it. With the dispersal of family members across Zimbabwe, the extended family may not be as privy to matters between spouses who remain in Zimbabwe and their migrant spouses. Although media coverage and statistics from court cases show that divorce rates are on the increase among couples living together in Zimbabwe[2], marital conflicts and divorce are pronounced between transnational spouses[3]. Married non-migrants explained in the interviews that they would not migrate without their spouses and children because they

[2] The High Court of Zimbabwe revealed that 1 102 couples in Harare and Bulawayo had registered for divorce between January and July 2015 (News Day, Harare, July 21, 2015). Available at: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2015/07/1-102-couples-register-for-divorce-since-january/>. Accessed: 01.24.2019. In 2017, 42 couples were registering for divorce every week in Harare which translated into at least 2 500 marriages being terminated every year in Harare alone (*Daily News*, Harare, October 1, 2017). Available at: <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2017/10/01/economic-decay-ruins-marriages>. Accessed: 01.24.2019.

[3] Transnational migration, which had resulted in couples leaving apart, was cited among the reasons for the high divorce rate in Zimbabwe (*The Sunday News*, Harare, Mar 25, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sundaynews.co.zw/children-hit-hardest-by-zimbabwes-escalating-divorce-rates-2/>. Accessed: 01.24.2019).

believed that the split families that resulted from transnational migration had contributed to the high divorce rate in Zimbabwe. De Haas and Van Rooij (2010) note that international migration resulted in non-migrant wives assuming more responsibilities and the ensuing pressure led to conflict, divorce, and ultimately an increase in the number of single-headed households in rural Morocco.

Migration also transforms gender roles in families where one spouse has migrated. Parallels can be drawn between Zimbabwe and the Philippines and Indonesia where the need to increase household income has superseded traditional family and gender ideologies (Lam, Yeoh, 2018). In these various contexts, non-migrant women assume men's roles in addition to their caregiving roles, which is a double burden (Battistella, Conaco, 1998). However, non-migrant women's assumption of male roles is accepted because the normative view that men are the breadwinners and heads of households legitimizes men's migration (Parreñas, 2008). Notwithstanding the difficulties that non-migrant wives face, men's absence enables women to make decisions and gain autonomy especially where the extended family is excluded. Non-migrant wives become *de facto* heads of households and this creates opportunities to realize their full potential (Desai, Banerji, 2008; Kufakurinani, 2013; Ullah, 2017).

Where women migrate and men become the non-migrant spouses, various scenarios unfold. Firstly, men potentially assume caregiving roles in addition to their traditional roles of being breadwinners, which results in them experiencing the same double burden that non-migrant women carry. Secondly, men struggle with caregiving roles because they find nurturing emasculating, or they simply lack experience on how to do it well. Such men can end up neglecting the new roles and seeking ways to reassert their masculinity outside the home (Parreñas, 2008). This could involve drinking and extramarital affairs leading to a troubled marriage or divorce. This frequently appeared in interviews with non-migrants in Zimbabwe. A third possibility is that for unemployed men, the shift from the breadwinner to the caregiving role provides them with the platform to reinvent and reclaim their masculinity as similarly noted among non-migrant Filipino husbands (Pingol, 2001). Although men's roles changed in such cases, they were still in charge of the household and continued to make decisions the same way they had before their wives migrated (Parreñas, 2010). Non-migrant men find consolation in the moral consistency between a responsible husband and a good father. If they cannot be the breadwinner for the family, they assume the role of a good father (Lam, Yeoh, 2018). This redeems them in the family if not in the broader society.

Long-distance Parenting

The increase in the volume of transnational migration means that there are increasing numbers of children who are growing up in Zimbabwe without

one or both parents. Transnational migration can improve families' material condition through remittances but this comes with social costs such as family separation especially for migrants from the global South (Madianou, Miller, 2011). Structural, legal, sociocultural, and personal obstacles in destination countries place migrant parents, particularly mothers, in a predicament; they make the agonizing choice between taking their children along with them or leaving them behind in Zimbabwe. If they migrate with their children, they will be able to keep the family together but worry about the children's ability to adapt to the receiving country. They also must find a way to deal with the pressure of juggling their jobs with parenting without domestic employees or assistance from the extended family. If they leave the children behind, they may be able to fulfil their economic responsibilities to the children but face problems finding a trustworthy substitute to care for the children and meet their social and emotional needs. They must also contend with their children growing up without them and missing out on milestones in their children's lives. Many parents understand that their children will suffer emotionally but they leave them nonetheless because of the need to provide for their economic needs (Orellana *et al.*, 2001; Parreñas, 2010). This dilemma is reflected by the contradictory impacts of migration on children who are left behind in the country of origin. Parreñas (2005, p. 333) aptly presents the social costs of transnational migration on the family,

> Despite rapid advancements in technology from instant messages to email correspondence, transnational intimacy does not provide 'full' intimacy to the family. The joys of physical contact, the emotional security of physical presence, and the familiarity allowed by physical proximity are still denied transnational family members.

Literature on transnational migration around the world shows that economic benefits for non-migrant children are counterbalanced by social costs. In this sense, Shen and Zhang (2018) aptly portray migration as a double-edged sword with both negative and positive outcomes for non-migrant children in varying circumstances in rural China. One of the most adverse social impacts on non-migrant children who may enjoy material comfort is that they grow up without parental guidance and nurturing especially where the extended family is unable to play an active role. Migrant parents can keep in touch through what Madianou and Miller (2011) refer to as mobile phone parenting or, according to, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997), transnational mothering, but this cannot substitute parents' physical presence as shown by Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor (2014) on Zimbabwe and Parreñas (2008, 2010) on the Philippines. Many migrant parents feel guilty about leaving behind their children and usually compensate for their absence by overindulging them through remittances. Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor (2014) refer to these children as "diaspora orphans" which suggests the absence of proxy parents whose traditional role

would ensure that the term orphan would not be used to refer to such children. Yet, Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor (2014) note that non-migrant children do not fit the quintessential state of being an orphan framed around vulnerability and poverty because these children are economically well provided for. Indeed, their circumstances are contradictory; they blend neglect with attention, a situation captured by Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor (2014, p. 116) who point out that these children are labelled as both "snobbish and profligate" and "abused, emotionally deprived and neglected". For example, they attend the best schools yet their parents are unable to attend parental school activities the result being that either domestic workers attend on their behalf or no one does.

The gender division of domestic labor in Zimbabwean cultures assigns caregiving and childcare roles to women. This has implications on gender roles and relations when women migrate and leave behind their children and husbands, as is also the case in Indonesia and the Philippines (Lam, Yeoh, 2018; Parreñas, 2001, 2010). Gender roles are renegotiated in such situations in ways that require men to assume childcare roles or, at least, oversee their performance by hired domestic workers or relatives invited to play the caregiving role. Colonial era migration in Zimbabwe targeted men as heads of households while women were viewed through the Victorian ideology gender prism as economically dependent on men. However, feminization of caregiving labor led to a corresponding feminization of migration and demand for women's labor in the domestic sphere has seen growing numbers of women migrating from Zimbabwe and other African countries as well as from Southeast Asia to the Middle East where such labor is in demand. The irony is that migrant women swap roles with their husbands for jobs that grant them economic independence but require them to continue playing the same caregiving roles and keep them under the same conditions of deference in receiving countries (Parreñas, 2001).

Feminization of the nurturing role places migrant mothers in a dilemma. Migration enables them to provide for their children's material needs as it simultaneously takes them away from the nurturing role which is culturally assigned to them. Migrant mothers' joy in being able to provide for their children is counteracted by the guilt that comes with physical absence from their children's everyday lives. Women's culturally sanctioned nurturing role means that when migrant mothers' children do not turn out well, many societies, Zimbabwe included, interpret this as a case of failed motherhood and not failed fatherhood even if the father may have been physically present much of the time in the children's lives as a non-migrant spouse. Parreñas (2010) observes that moral pressure is brought to bear on transnational mothers because of moral resistance to the very idea of migrant and physically absent motherhood. Many migrant and non-migrant research participants who were mothers saw

both migrating with their children and leaving them behind as translating into failed motherhood. Doreen, a single mother, did not want to leave behind her children without parental supervision. Jane, who could not migrate because of her children, presented her dilemma as follows, "I can't leave behind my children. It's not motherly. […] You can't be a parent without your children." For Tadiwa, the predicament was about either leaving her children alone in Zimbabwe or migrating with them to her intended destination country in Europe where she believed they would face racism.

The costs of migration on children who are left behind in Zimbabwe manifest themselves through poor performance in school, delinquency, and disrespect for elders, guardians, and teachers (Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor, 2014; Ndlovu, Tigere, 2018). Similar outcomes have also been observed in countries such as the Philippines which has experienced largescale overseas migration especially by women (Asis, 2006). Most of the children are left on their own or in the care of domestic workers to whom migrant parents delegate emotional labor in their children's lives. Establishing the extent to which delegation of parental roles to housemaids shapes the emotional and mental development of children with migrant parents is work in progress in Zimbabwe. Suffice it to say that housemaids are not necessarily proxies or surrogate mothers in the meaning implied in the traditional kinship structure even if the relationship between domestic workers and their employers may create a semblance of kinship because of co-residence and familiarity. Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor (2014) found out that housemaids in Zimbabwe face difficulties disciplining teenage children in their care because these children know that they are paid workers and do not respect them.

At a global level, the impact of parental migration on non-migrant children's academic performance is varied depending on "the country, family forms and cultural traditions, and the type of migration" (Battistella, Conaco, 1998, p. 224). While the absence of parental supervision on school work may lead to poor academic performance, increase in household income and resources through remittances can improve academic performance (Bai *et al.*, 2018; Battistella, Conaco, 1998). Conversely, literature on non-migrant children in Zimbabwe shows that migration has had a negative impact on such children's academic performance (Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor, 2014; Ndlovu, Tigere, 2018). The absence of parents from children and adolescents' lives can also have negative emotional, developmental, and disciplinary effects on the children as noted by Doreen who believed that children who lacked parental supervision were "out of control". Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor (2014) noted this among teenage sons of migrant fathers who misbehaved because of the absence of an authoritative figure in the person of their fathers. This situation is exacerbated by migrant fathers who insist on gender-normative

views of child-rearing without the necessary adjustment of performance of fatherhood (Parreñas, 2008). Both migrant and non-migrant mothers worried about absence from their teenage daughters' everyday lives, which they saw as contributing to teenage pregnancies and creating emotional distance between parents and their children.

Occasionally, older children in nuclear families assume the role of guardian to their younger siblings and they struggle with emotional and psychological pressure, which comes from nurturing their younger siblings. Girls may end up assuming more domestic roles as substitutes for their absent mothers leading to changes in the meaning of childhood (Jingzhong, 2011). This blurring of age boundaries is contrary to Zimbabwean cultures in which children help with domestic chores under adult supervision without necessarily running the affairs of the home and raising their younger siblings. The problem of discipline also arises where older children left in charge of younger siblings are generally close to them in age (Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor, 2014).

The Extended Family and the Transnationalism Paradox

Contemporary migration has paradoxical impacts on the role of the extended family. Notwithstanding its historical marginalization due to processes that accompanied colonization, the extended family is maintained or resuscitated, and its instrumental value emphasized where its system of proxies enables migrants to juggle their lives across transnational spaces. In this regard, transnational migration has strengthened the extended family as both migrants and non-migrant family members adapt its traditional functions to emerging needs. The extended family plays a bigger role where it is the mother and not the father who has migrated because the mother's absence leaves behind a huge void in children's lives (Battistella, Conaco, 1998). Migrants' investment in properties and businesses in Zimbabwe is facilitated by the presence of relatives who supervise the activities although this has the potential to ruin family relationships as shown below. Migrants often rely on relatives to take care of their non-migrant children (Battistella, Conaco, 1998; Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor, 2014; Parreñas, 2001, 2010). There are families where migrants leave the children with their grandparents leading to reparenting among the elderly, which has led to role reversal and contradiction of the traditional family norm in which adult children look after their aging parents.

Migrants sometimes delegate the duty to take care of their elderly parents to their non-migrant children. Institutionalized care in such situations could lift the burden off the children's shoulders but it is disapproved of in Zimbabwe because it is regarded as unorthodox and "unAfrican". Zimbabwean cultures condemn child abandonment and placement of the elderly in institutionalized care which is the reason why kinship in these cultures is structured around a

system of proxies. Conventionally, parents had children not just out of love but also as a source of care in old age. Migration thus negatively affects the elderly (Nguyen, Yeoh, Toyota, 2006).

Conversely, the extended family has undergone cumulative strain as it struggles to adapt to family relationships in contemporary Zimbabwe; in public discourse in the country, it is not uncommon to hear the sentiment that the extended family has become dysfunctional and anachronistic. Its influence has waned considerably as its individual members seek to escape the obligations that it places on them especially in a context characterized by protracted economic crisis as is the case in Zimbabwe. In this context, leaving children with the extended family generates expectations and migrant parents' failure to meet them can lead to conflict and resentment (Kufakurinani, 2013; Parreñas, 2010). Migrant and non-migrant parents overwhelmingly spoke against leaving their children in the care of the extended family. Tsitsi complained about how members of the extended family constantly asked for money because they were taking care of her two children. She eventually arranged for the children to live on their own. Migrant parents' long physical absences sometimes result in young children transferring their affection to domestic workers or other adults physically present as proxy parents in the children's lives. In urban Zimbabwe, these proxies can be non-kin and are sometimes the neighbors as migrant parents may prefer them to the extended family due to betrayal of trust by relatives who subject the children left in their care to sexual, physical, and emotional abuse (Kufakurinani, 2013). Indiscipline among migrants' non-migrant children is also an issue where relatives are called upon to play the role of foster parents because they sometimes avoid disciplining the children for fear that the latter would report to their parents in the diaspora resulting in remittances being cut off (Kufakurinani, Pasura, McGregor, 2014). The transactional nature of such arrangements has weakened the traditional responsibility that adults had to discipline children even if they were not the biological parents as conveyed in adages such as it takes a village to raise a child.

Economic hardships have also strained relationships in the extended family as migrants attempt to shirk social and economic obligations to the extended family and the pressures they entail. Complaints about unrealistic demands by relatives in Zimbabwe feature regularly in narratives among Zimbabweans in the diaspora[4]. Some of them use various online platforms to share individual stories

[4] Slymediatv Online TV Network presented the Zimbabwean diaspora's complaints about demands for money from family in Zimbabwe. The video was aptly entitled "Zimbabwe Diaspora Complaints" (Published on March 20, 2016). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOgPw0SHQ2A>. Accessed: 07.15.2019. See also "Extravagant Demands Unsettling some Zimbabweans in Diaspora". VOA Studio 7 interviewed two Zimbabwean men, one in Zimbabwe and the other in the diaspora, on April 4, 2015. Available at: <https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/diaspora-zimbabweans-remittances/2706681.html>. Accessed: 07.15.2019.

on how they slough off traditional family obligations or "escape" from extended family demands[5]. Interestingly, as migrant research participants complained about financial demands by relatives back in Zimbabwe, non-migrant research participants complained about migrant relatives who were unable to send money and "came back with nothing". The tension that is created by migrants' quest for autonomy or lack of extra money to send to Zimbabwe and non-migrant relatives' displeasure with what they see as rejection can lead to resentment and bitterness among non-migrant family members who feel neglected as they sink into deeper poverty (Kufakurinani, 2013). There are also conflicts over who in the family should receive the remittances and abuse of trust involving property scams and diversion of remittances towards uses other than those specified by the migrant. Some of the conflicts are caused by envy and suspicion by extended family members that the nuclear family is keeping to itself money and goodies from the diaspora intended for them, a typical example of such conflicts happening between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law (Kufakurinani, 2013). The daughter-in-law married to the migrant son is normally accused of "eating alone" – sharing food and goodies being the glue that binds relationships in Zimbabwean cultures as the Shona proverb cited earlier in this article attests to. Economic crises tend to illuminate the transactional value of relationships; affection acquires a material value in the sense that it can be withdrawn for failure to remit the real or perceived benefits of migration.

It has become common that migrants miss important family events such as weddings and funerals which sometimes irks relatives in Zimbabwe (see Kufakurinani, 2013). The opposite also happens where migrants marry, have children, and die in the diaspora in the absence of their parents, siblings, and other relatives. Some even get buried there without the relatives who would normally attend their funerals in Zimbabwe. Migration has thus eroded the likelihood that places of birth, life, and death will coincide (Skrbiš, 2008).

Conclusion

Transnational migration has discernible sociocultural impacts on the family. As migrant parents fulfil economic obligations to their children, their physical absence creates social and emotional voids in the lives of their children who remain in Zimbabwe. The structure of the family has become less predictable as migrants devise a continuum of unorthodox arrangements to fill in the void their absence creates. The usual delineation of gender roles in terms of masculinization of the breadwinner role and feminization of caregiving has

[5] Zimbabweans in the diaspora usually share complaints about demands by family members in Zimbabwe and how they react to them under pseudonyms in readers' comments on online stories on Zimbabwe and its economic problems, for example, the VOA Studio 7 story and the Slymediatv video referred to in footnote 4 above.

become blurred as women and men swap roles. Grandparents are called upon to re-parent in a culture where the abled-bodied are customarily expected to take care of the elderly. In an unusual reversal of generational obligations, children who themselves need care have become heads of households parenting younger siblings. In a sociocultural milieu characterized by dispersal of family members, the extended family also finds itself in an ambiguous position in which it fluctuates between relevance and anachronism. As gender roles, parenting, aging, childhood, and family relationships are redefined, traditional values governing the family become difficult to sustain in households and families with migrant members. The traditional family structure has become fluid due to family constellations that span transnational spaces. This fluidity has discernible impacts on marriage, parenting, childhood, aging, and family obligations.

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