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Editorial

Racism, Xenophobia and Solidarity in Migration and Mobility Politics: Does COVID-19 make any difference?

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This issue was originally planned to center on the COVID-19 pandemic, intended for publication at its peak. However, one of the lingering effects of the pandemic was the prolonged production timeline of this issue. I attribute the primary cause of this delay to a pandemic-induced sense of lethargy, which hindered my ability to kickstart the project despite earnest intentions. Could this be akin to experiencing a form of long COVID affecting productivity? Indeed, it seems so. Additionally, insufficient submissions on the topic further extended the timeline. Nevertheless, I commend the timely and persistent efforts of Dr. Afia Serwaa Afrifa, Mr. Cobbener Sungani, Dr. Pascal Newbourne Mwale, Dr. Ayobami Abayomi Popoola, Hangwelani Hope Magidimisha-Chipingu, Lovemore Chipungu, and Elizabeth Adesunmbo Omotayo for their submissions and unwavering commitment.

In "Economic Forced Migration in Southern Africa: The Case of Malawi," Cobbener Sungani and Pascal Newbourne Mwale delve into the socioeconomic disparities perpetuated by free-market capitalism and its neoliberal underpinnings. They spotlight the plight of Malawian "economic refugees" in South Africa, emphasizing the pervasive inequality and precarity they endure. Through interdisciplinary methodologies, they advocate for migrant rights and propose fostering solidarity between South Africans and Malawian migrants to address these challenges.

Similarly, in "Investigating the Vulnerability of Foreign Migrants' Businesses in Durban, South Africa during the COVID-19 Pandemic," Ayobami Abayomi Popoola, Hangwelani Hope Magidimisha-Chipingu, and Lovemore Chipungu explore the vulnerabilities faced by immigrant businesses in Durban. Their empirical analysis underscores the heightened insecurity experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs, exacerbated by urban xenophobia. By shedding light on these challenges, they advocate for inclusive practices and urge further research to inform global responses to similar situations. Furthermore, they interrogate how the resilience of immigrant businesses be nurtured? Drawing from data gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors scrutinize the susceptibility of immigrant enterprises in Durban, South Africa, employing a quantitative methodology that encompasses the perspectives of 53 small-scale immigrant business owners. They contend that investigating these insecurities during the pandemic offers valuable insights applicable to similar contexts worldwide.

"The Complexities of Transnational Childcare Practices among Ghanaian Families in the context of a Global Pandemic," authored by Patricia Serwaa Afrifa, delves into the intricate landscape of childcare practices among Ghanaian diaspora families. Afrifa grounds her study in the fundamental role of nurturing children within human and indigenous African societies. She notes how the influence of contemporary Western ideas, norms, and values, often referred to as "Macdonaldization" (Ritzer, 2009), has been altering traditional practices, including the extended family system prevalent in African societies.

The challenges of diaspora life, such as distance from Ghana, travel expenses, and visa hurdles, already hinder easy access to collective family-based childcare. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these difficulties with travel bans, lockdowns, and safety measures. Afrifa explores

the impact of these circumstances on childcare options for parents, particularly the traditional practice of involving older family members in childcare. She highlights the evolving decisions families had to make and the consequences thereof, offering insights applicable to similar situations.

Shifting the focus to American studies, the question of "What does it mean to be American?" takes center stage. Elizabeth Adesunmbo Omotayo, in her work "Illusion or Reality: A Recontextualized Perspective of 'the American Dream' in Imbolo Mbue's Behold the Dreamers (2016)," examines Mbue's perspective on this question in the context of contemporary African migration to the US. Omotayo explores how African migrants navigate the challenges of assimilation and pursuit of the elusive "American Dream."

Drawing from Mbue's narrative, Omotayo challenges the notion of a straightforward path to the American Dream, using Harold Bloom's concepts of "Party of Hope" and "the American Nightmare" to illustrate the complexities migrants face. She discusses how essentialization and discrimination hinder many African migrants from fully realizing the Dream, despite their educational attainment and labor market participation. Omotayo highlights the ephemeral nature of achieving both tangible and intangible aspects of the Dream, noting that even when material conditions improve, persistent obstacles can turn the Dream into a nightmare or an illusion.

For Omotayo, essentialization and discrimination short-circuit the possibility that many African migrants can ever attain the Dream; being college-educated is also not necessarily a direct line to the realization of the tangible elements of the Dream as many Nigerians find (Kaba, 2007) . Nigerians immigrants are the most educated Americans and their labor market participation is also some of the highest. However, their pay and speed of advancement into the

top echelons of management and decision making are not commensurate with their skills, qualification and experience (Kaba, 2007). What's more, the attainment of the intangible aspects of the American Dream is ephemeral and unattainable for many migrants. Even where some aspirations and better material conditions are attained, more intractable obstacles, crises and challenges may manifest that make the Dream more of a nightmare or at best, an illusion.

There are numerous contentious issues surrounding migration, with Africans facing significant challenges in this arena. In the United States, the immigration system is widely considered broken, evidenced by the crisis unfolding at the US Southern border and the ongoing struggle between Red (Republican) and Blue (Democratic) states. Migrants are being shuffled from Red to Blue States in ways that often disregard their humanity and dignity. The concept of refuge cities and the Democratic Party's traditionally more compassionate approach to migration are now being questioned, as some Democratic politicians adopt rhetoric typically associated with conservative Republicans. They argue that the country, city, or state is overwhelmed and cannot accommodate more migrants. They claim budget constraints and blame migrants for resource shortages, imposing harsh conditions to deter further migration and incentivize those already present to leave, even going as far as funding transportation for their departure.

Recent developments reveal that African migrants are among those crossing the US Southern border, some of whom have settled in New York City, drawing attention from authorities. It's heartening to see increased advocacy from at least one African Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) on behalf of these migrants. However, it's alarming to discover the existence of a "luxury" category for border crossings, where migrants pay exorbitant

sums to traffickers for more comfortable transportation, such as flights to South America, before undertaking the more perilous segments of their journey.

In the post-COVID era, as educational institutions grapple with the fallout of remote learning and economic instability, the cracks in the system are laid bare. Let's not mince words: remote learning has been a debacle. Students, already burdened with the uncertainty of the pandemic, have been left adrift in a sea of academic chaos. The question of their preparedness for the challenges ahead looms ominously, a stark reminder of the systemic failures that plague our education system. It is very challenging that the US is one of the most powerful among the countries with noticeable backsliding of democracy. As we confront these challenges, it's imperative that we remain vigilant in advocating for the rights and opportunities of all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. Only through concerted effort and systemic reform can we hope to build a more equitable and inclusive educational system—one that empowers students to thrive in the post-COVID era and beyond (Dennis, 2022).

Besides the knotty problem of students' emotional distress while navigating a tumultuous educational landscape, there are portents of significant changes in Higher Education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly, student mobility was highly circumscribed. There were serious effects on students' mental health. Fearing revenue losses, higher educational institutions became more neoliberal and transactional in their approach, marketing aggressively and competitively to attract and enroll students who then were treated more like customers whose whims and fancies should be accommodated. Many international students for whom affordability and navigating the ordeal of visas were problems also decided to either delay or forgo higher education entirely.

There is a migrant crisis involving Africa in Europe, and the United Kingdom is an example. There, a deal with Rwanda designates it as a host for refugees and asylum-seekers sent from the UK for processing. This move has sparked legal challenges, with critics arguing that it violates the human rights of migrants by sending them to a country with a questionable human rights record. This situation draws parallels to past attempts by a previous administration to deport individuals of Caribbean descent, including the Windrush generation and their descendants, from the UK to various Caribbean countries, which caused significant outcry and was eventually retracted. Additionally, there are efforts to restrict foreign students' ability to bring family members with them or to reunite with family.

Beyond these specific cases, there are broader migrant crises affecting the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU). European nations are grappling with an influx of migrants fleeing war, conflict, climate change disasters, and economic hardship, primarily from the Middle East and North Africa, including Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and Eritrea. The surge in arrivals, reaching approximately 5.2 million refugees and migrants seeking refuge in Europe in 2016, the largest number since the end of World War II, has fueled xenophobia and racism. European countries, adopting a "Fortress Europe" mentality, are resistant to accepting more migrants (USA for UNHCR; Olorunlana, 2023), leading to increased anti-immigrant sentiments and violence. Efforts have been made to develop new policies and agreements (EU, 2023), including an asylum pact (EU 1, 2023), but the COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified these challenges.

Recent developments highlight African countries' involvement in sending labor to Israel, aiming to fill the gap left by the absence of Palestinian workers, who are currently prohibited

from entering the country. Notably, nations like Malawi and Kenya have participated in this initiative, sparking discussions about their role in the Israel-Palestinian conflict (Siele, 2023; Pensulo, 2023; Padatha, 2024).

In a related context, I recently attended a virtual book launch focusing on migration, racism, border regimes, and solidarity politics. The event featured "Two topical volumes on migration and racism, border regimes, and politics of solidarity," including The Cambridge History of Global Migrations (Borges & Hsu, 2023). During the discussions, speakers highlighted the intricate nature of migration issues, particularly in the midst of ongoing global crises like the state and legitimacy. They emphasized the severity of deportation regimes, particularly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and underscored the inherent racialization and class dynamics within mobility patterns.

The emergence of right-wing governments and the diminishing influence of left-wing activism have further complicated migration politics, as evidenced by the Red versus Blue state contestation in the US. Additionally, there's a noticeable discrepancy in responses to various migrant groups, often dictated by geopolitical interests. Despite rhetoric about a liberal, transnational world, the pandemic has exposed the limitations of such ideals, especially within migration politics.

Whether in the continent or in other regions, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the trauma of migration for most Africans. In the UK and US, the deaths were disproportionately higher among nonwhite people, and deaths among people of African descent were only surpassed by those among Native Americans (Sabo & Johnson, 2023). "Approximately 97.9 out of every 100,000 African Americans have died from COVID-19, a mortality rate that is a third

higher than that for Latinos (64.7 per 100,000), and more than double than that for whites (46.6 per 100,000) and Asians (40.4 per 100,000)" (Vasquez Reyes, 2020).

For the UK, according to a 2021 study "A recent systematic review of 50 studies have showed that people from ethnic minority background in the UK and other countries, particularly Black and South Asian groups, have been disproportionately affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic compared to people of White ethnic background" (Nafilyan, et al., 2021). There were fewer fatalities among minorities, including people of African descent later on (UK Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2023). According to Nalfiyan et al, this is due to the mitigating strategies undertaken in response to the dismal outcomes during the earlier days of the pandemic.

Looking ahead, urgent action is imperative, necessitating a coordinated global policy response that prioritizes the well-being of individuals and ensures effective implementation. For this reason alone, it is clear that the contributors to this edition of the journal advance powerful, thought-provoking themes, which should not be ignored.

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The Complexities of Transnational Childcare Practices among Ghanaian Families in a Context of Global Pandemic

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Abstract

Childcare remains central in all human societies. This is because it is in children that humans invest their immortality and ensure the continuity of humanity. This partly explains the social collectivism that is brought to bear in childcare to the extent that in some indigenous African societies, the popular axiom is: "It takes a village to raise to raise a child". While the forces of

modernity, neoliberalism, and the near-collapse of the extended family system across the world, including indigenous societies, have negatively impacted collective childcare, parents continue to devise creative strategies to nurture their children. The members of the Ghanaian diaspora in the United States of America (USA) often extended invitations to older members of their families, including their mothers, to join them across the Atlantic to help with nurturing their children. This practice of transnational migration of child carers was very efficient in helping children to access Ghanaian cultural values and languages, until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. With the outbreak of the pandemic, one way of controlling its totalizing effect was the imposition of social distance protocols, which at the peak of the pandemic involved a global ban on all means of human crisscrossing the world. This implied that most diasporic Ghanaians had their family-dependent source of childcare supply significantly cut. This phenomenon inspired the paper. Through in-depth interviews with selected Ghanaian families in the USA through social media and phones, this paper explores the impact of the ban on transnational travel on childcare practices among Ghanaian diaspora in the USA. The key findings of the study suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic did not only cripple the economies of the world, it also blocked the alternatives available to Ghanaians to receive an additional source of care for their children.

Introduction

Globally, childcare options are influenced by several factors. Transnational childcare practices among Africans in the diaspora are very common, and Ghana is no exception in this regard. Dankyi (2012), writing about childcare for Ghanaian parents living in the diaspora, discusses how parents bring a family relation, especially grandmothers, aunties, older siblings, or cousins, to augment their childcare options. In most instances, these relatives are willing and available to travel, not just because of the opportunities that such a migration process offers for both parties, but also because family members see it as an obligation (Poeze and Dankyi, 2016). Alternatively, some parents send their children back home and leave them in the care of relatives. The involvement of the family in childcare provision usually appears to be the first option for most Ghanaian parents, both at home and abroad, because of institutionalized practices within the extended family system and the consequent obligations of its members (Afrifa 2018).

The use of family care draws on the most desired form of social capital for childcare provision. Theoretically, the concept of social capital includes social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them and the values of these for achieving mutual goals where the reciprocities that beneficiaries receive are based on the value of trust for achieving mutual goals (Baron and Shuller 2000). Studies on childcare practices in Africa and Ghana especially have focused on the possibility of kinship care based on the pragmatic use of high levels of social capital that ideally ensure care for the needy in the family, especially deprived children and orphans (Oppong 2004). In sub-Saharan Africa, informal care from kin members ensures the socialization, education and general maintenance of children. This kind of arrangement is based on a network of kinship support that ensures the collective care of children. This notion emphasises that the disruptions in social capital within the family can lead to the utilization of formal paid care rather than family-

based care or informal care (Goody 1982, Oppong 2004). It is for this reason that most Ghanaians in the diaspora embrace family support in childcare provision.

The institutionalized nature of family-based childcare and its perceived benefits in Ghanaian society motivates the choice of this kind of arrangement even in the diaspora. Several authors have emphasised its advantages, not only for the children but also for the parents, due to the ability of kith and kin to collaboratively and effectively socialize the younger generation by passing on family values and the transfer of indigenous languages, as well as other culturally desirable qualities (Coe 2011, 2012; Dankyi and Poeze, 2016). However, traumatic and destabilizing factors such as the COVID-19 crisis and its accompanying restrictions on travel and lockdowns have had some impact on transnational childcare arrangements. In March 2020, owing to the high number of infections and deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic, drastic measures were taken to stop the spread of the viral infection (Ahrens et al., 2021). Travel bans were issued both domestically and internationally worldwide. Stricter measures such as lockdowns resulted in very strict restrictions on movements and stay-at-home policies (Ahrens et al., 2021).

The outbreak of COVID-19 had a significant impact on transnational families, particularly concerning childcare arrangements. Many were forced to cancel their plans to travel, resulting in a disruption of childcare arrangements. In some cases, this included grandparents or other relatives who were due to provide childcare and were unable to travel due to lockdowns and strict travel restrictions (Hiebert et al., 2021). This put additional pressure on parents, who had to find alternative childcare solutions at short notice. With borders closed and travel restrictions in place during the pandemic, it was more difficult for members of families to keep in touch with, and/or connect with one another in person (Kiang et al., 2021). This was

particularly difficult for families with young children, who were unable to communicate effectively with their relatives (Kiang et al., 2021).

COVID-19 had a dramatic and negative impact on transnational families in the USA, particularly with child care arrangements. For example, the disruption of international travel created issues for families where one or more parents may work abroad and during the pandemic, it has become much more difficult for them to return to the United States to provide care for their children (Hsin and Li, 2020). Furthermore, the lack of access to healthcare, economic hardship and other fears associated with the virus have made it difficult for some parents to maintain their employment, leading to a decrease in income and a lack of resources for childcare (Belgrave, Cimino and Wilson, 2021). Researchers argue that transnational families in the USA are likely to experience negative psychological effects, such as stress and anxiety, due to the disruption in childcare arrangements and the disruption of support systems as a result of COVID-19 (Padela and Gunter, 2020; Panchal et al., 2021).   Although studies have highlighted the varying effects of COVID-19 pandemic on transnational families with regards to childcare arrangements, the experiences of Ghanaian transnational parents in the USA have been unexplored, thereby creating a knowledge gap in literature.

In the quest to contribute to knowledge by dealing with the knowledge gap identified in literature, this paper aims to examine how restrictions on human movement due to COVID-19 have influenced transnational childcare arrangements in terms of i) parents' ability to visit their children left behind; ii) sending children to Ghana due to complexities of combining childcare and work in the USA; and iii) inviting family over to assist with childcare. This paper dwells on qualitative data collected from Ghanaian working parents in the USA (Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio) involved in any of the types of transnational childcare options. The paper is

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structured in three main sections. The first section is a literature review on childcare and transnational care. The second and third sections discuss methodology, findings and conclusions, respectively.

The Concept of Care, Ghanaian Migration and Transnational Childcare

Tracing the origin of care, scholars such as Oppong (1999) and Daly (2001) posit that care began as a woman-specific concept as it was seen mainly as part of the household chores – unpaid domestic labor. Care was conceived in the context of unpaid domestic labor as part of kinship and marriage responsibilities. The idealized concept of women's roles being the ability to provide care for children has always been considered paramount because of the value attached to them. Thus, care tends to be seen as a gift and or responsibility inside the sphere of kinship or friendship (Bubeck 1995). Based on its description as a domestic role which is dependent on affective ties from familial and friendship relationships, it is perceived more as an obligation than work and therefore not paid. Literature on the nature of the West African family system and the Ghanaian family specifically influences the type of childcare option. To an African, the concept of family is generally more inclusive in depth and span and embraces a wider membership than the word suggests in the Euro-American context (Goody 1982; Boateng 1996; Nukunya 2003; Afrifa 2010). The traditional African family is extended and revolves around joint households. It includes the living and the dead (designated as living dead) as well as the unborn whom the family considers as buds of hope (Awedoba, 2007).

Structural factors such as division of labor and expectations of an ancestor ensures that child care is a collective venture. For instance, among the Bambara of Mali, when an old person

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retires from work while living next to their sons or daughters, they need to find time to participate in childcare. This is because among the Bambara, access to the status of an elder involves taking care of little ones and inculcating wisdom and good manners in them. An old man or woman who forfeits the role will not access the role of an ancestor. This scenario is not different from the Ghanaian situation, as these features of the family structure render childcare being organized as a collective venture rather than an individual affair (Oppong, 2001).

Therefore, in the African and the Ghanaian context, childcare arrangements within the kinship network are usually established through the delegation of parental roles (kinship fostering) or support within the household from other kin. Children circulate within households depending on their specific needs, such as the health and wealth of the caregiver and their parents, proximity to school, and opportunities to learn a trade or a skill. Therefore, Nukunya (2003) notes, polygyny as a pervasive practice in Africa also served the purpose of shared caregiving due to the prevalence of large households and joint families. This was more possible and congenial where co-residents' children and co-wives were on good terms. Poeze, Dankyi and Mazzucato (2017) indicate that in childcare provision, kinship relationships with parents are very important for the proper maintenance and care of the children. In some communities such as the Dagomba, inexperienced mothers of neonates take a maternal leave from their husband's house and move to their own parents' homes once they have children (Adam 2012). It can be deduced from this description that duolocal residence might also be practiced when mothers have new babies.

Nanbigne (2010) notes that children occupy a special place in the Dagaaba household. A child in the household is supposed to be comfortable and not lack anything. So, arrangements are

made such that the child has several caregivers (considered mothers and fathers) at any given time. So, right from birth, the child is given the best care that the family resources can provide. The mother is given a long time off from her normal everyday chores so that she does not only recover from the pressures and challenges of childbirth, but also has ample time to give the child ultimate care. Although this is the ideal, reality may differ depending on the kind of support the mother receives. For a woman who is lucky to have a good mother-in-law, ideal conditions prevail. The time away from the husband's house allows for traditional birth spacing and ensures that weaning is not done in a hurry because another baby is on the way. Again, the nature of polygynous households allowed for collective care from older siblings and co-wives of children once mothers returned from their natal homes.

Apart from the support from polygynous households, scholars such as Nanbigne (2010) and Oppong (2001) also document how other kin provide care for children within the household. Oppong (2004) writes that in the past, the young child was the 'darling' of the family. She cites Tallensi examples from Fortes (1949) where during the first three years, the nursing mother received support from kin to give her enough time to wean and give more attention to the child. Badasu (2004) adds that among the Ewes, the care of young children was the duty of kin or the lineage despite the fact that the mother was the primary caregiver. This is because the child is seen as the center of life and considered a dependent individual who needs to be cared for, socialized and supported by adult members of the family according to social norms and values (Nanbigne 2010; Nukunya 2003). Within the households, grandmothers also played significant roles in childcare provision. Literature on the consequence of family or household structure on child well-being underscores not only the absence of parents but, to a larger extent, the absence of the grandmother in the household as a major determinant of child well-being (Gordon,

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Kaestner and Korenman 2008). By remaining actively involved in the rearing of their grandchildren, grandmothers have a helpful effect on the reproductive success of their children as well as the survival of their grandchildren. Studies have shown that children living in an extended family with grandparents have been observed to benefit from the grandmother effect (Gray 2005; Sharma and Kanini 2006).

Clark (1999), writing on mothering and childcare among the Akan, highlights the role of grandmothers in childcare. She describes how grandmothers take care of young children to allow mothers to go about their daily activities in the market. This practice is also common among the Dagaaba. Nanbigne (2010) asserts that the grandmother of a Dagaaba child usually helps in bathing and massaging the child all over with shea butter. As a child grows older and can be carried, she/he is placed in the care of a girl, the daughter of any of the child's mother's brothers. The designated caregiver now becomes the babysitter who is expected to feed, clean, carry and rock the baby while the mother goes about her chores. In some cases, she accompanies the baby's mother to the farm as she works. The babysitter helps in feeding the child and the family also made sure that the caregiver is well-catered for. The belief among the Dagaaba is that the one feeding the child must always taste what the child eats and must also be fed properly to allow the child to be well-fed. Although the mother is expected to do farm work such as joining the other women to sow or harvest, there are certain taboos regarding dos and don'ts on the farm. She cannot, for example, use large hoes used to raise yam or millet mounds. This is seen to be back-breaking work, and a nursing mother is expected to reserve her back for carrying her baby.

More recent studies, which highlight the impact of social and economic changes on traditional childcare arrangements add that there are contemporary adaptations to traditional

systems of care that anthropological studies discuss. Afrifa (2018) mentions that despite dynamic

and changing economic and social forces as well as migrations that have resulted in the dispersal

of kin, family childcare practice is often chosen as the first option when parents need assistance.

It is, however, accompanied by different variations, such as instances where family members are

paid, or others are given some sort of remuneration. Apart from this, other forms of informal

networking are used in childcare provision. Afrifa's (2018) study examined childcare practices in

three geographically distinct areas of Accra, and the findings suggested high levels of informal

childcare practices largely influenced by family childcare, serving as good social capital for

parents through complementary childcare options.

The cultural orientation about childcare influence immigrant Africans and Ghanaians in

particular to employ family childcare options when they leave Ghana. According to the

Migration Policy Institute (2020), Ghana was the fifth largest country of origin for sub-Saharan

African immigrants to the USA in 2018, with approximately 181,000 Ghanaian immigrants

residing there. It is important to note that this data does not specify how many of these

immigrants migrated with their families, and there are also undocumented migrants who may not

be enumerated in official census. One of the key factors motivating Ghanaians to migrate with

their families to the USA is the prospect of better economic opportunities. According to a study

conducted by the University of Ghana, many Ghanaians migrate to the USA in search of better-

paying jobs, higher salaries, and improved living standards (Gyimah-Brempong and Maama-

Maime, 2019). This is supported by data from the Migration Policy Institute, which shows that

approximately 63 percent of Ghanaian immigrants in the USA are of working age (18-64 years),

with the majority employed in service, sales, or management occupations (Migration Policy

Institute, 2020). Another important factor motivating Ghanaians to migrate with their families to

the United States is the availability of educational opportunities. Ghanaian families tend to view the United States as a place where their children can receive a high-quality education and have better prospects for the future. A study by the University of Cape Coast in Ghana found that the pursuit of higher education was a key reason why many Ghanaians choose to migrate to the United States with their families (Awusabo-Asare and Kofi Owusu, 2018). This is supported by data from the Migration Policy Institute, which shows that approximately 39 percent of Ghanaian immigrants in the United States have attained at least a bachelor's degree, with many in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Migration Policy Institute 2020).

Migration can strain relationships between parents and children, especially if the migrant parent is unable to be physically present for important family events or milestones. A study by Gyimah-Brempong and Maama-Maime (2019) found that some Ghanaian children experience emotional distress and a sense of abandonment when their parents migrate. In this respect, several arrangements are made to ensure that the family functions as a social unit (Poeze, Dankyi and Mazzucato, 2017).

Literature on transnational families discusses the perception of the family, not as a geographical unit but as a social unit that is maintained across distances and national boundaries (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Poeze, Dankyi and Mazzucato, 2017). Thus, although there is emotional stress associated with geographical separation, certain transnational family practices such as communication, return visits, and remittances are essential in maintaining family ties. As several scholarly accounts have indicated, the whole idea of being in the diaspora influences the manner in which childcare is performed.

Transnational Childcare and Diasporan Parents

Bryceson and Vuorela (2002: 3) define transnational families as "families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely 'familyhood', even across national borders". Several reasons account for the existence of diasporan parenting. Paramount among these are economic factors, as in most instances the politico-economic situations of the home countries of immigrant parents do not support their family's collective emotional well-being and progress. According to Habecker (2016), immigrant parents generally choose to establish their own alternative cultural communities by linking up with other immigrants who share common ties of ethnicity and Africanness. The desire of most parents is to ensure that their children are exposed to these groups for the expected beneficial cultural influences. In this context, communities such as hometown associations, ethnic and national associations, church and mosques associations as well as alumni associations are favored, established, and joined (Halter and Johnson 2014).

Certain perceptions about immigrant parents' host countries' strong assimilation processes inform their decision to preserve their culture through childcare. For instance, language is a key issue of contention. This is because language is viewed as an important means of preserving a people's cultural heritage. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) assert that the USA is a "veritable cemetery of other languages" due to strong assimilative forces to push immigrants towards monoligualism. Hence deliberate efforts to maintain the identity of immigrants are ensured through counter-pressures that teach mother tongues from the home countries in the communities they build. Diasporan parents attend regular meetings with their children for this and other reasons believed to be crucial to socializing children to understand, adopt, and embrace important values.

Parenting styles are affected by immigration realities. To this end, the concepts of authoritarian, permissive, absent and communicative parenting respectively are used by Habecker (2016) to represent youths' assessment of their parents. In a study of youth from 21 African families, Habecker (2016) confirms that respondents indicated that communicative parenting was the most favorable. From the perspective of the children, authoritarian parenting which allowed parents to impose decisions on them was not much appreciated. This is because in their new diasporan context and in social relations with non-immigrant children, communicative parenting was more utilized by their peers' parents.

Other challenges include absent parenting, where parents leave children with their grandparents, other relatives, or a spouse, and sometimes friends, and later make arrangements for them to join them in the USA. This situation is usually born out of the immigration realities that may separate families for a very long time (Habecker, 2016). For this kind of parenting, annual visits and the use of technology through constant communication over the phone and other media are used to maintain the relationship between parents and their children. Although as earlier indicated, challenges encountered by immigrants inform their decisions to leave children behind until they are able to live together as a family, in other situations, sending children back to their home country is considered an effective disciplinary strategy. These strategies are also employed by other Africans in diaspora. For example, Kufakurinani et al.'s (2014) study on transnational parenting and the emergence of diasporan orphans in Zimbabwe, contended that among Zimbabwean immigrants in the United Kingdom (UK), it was not an uncommon practice for parents to send children home to be disciplined. Thus, in an interview with a study participant who was a teacher, it was revealed that one of the pupils nicknamed

'London' by his peers had been sent back from Britain to do his schooling in Zimbabwe because his parents thought it would stop him from 'going wild'.

The context of absent parenting synchronizes with what Coe (2012) describes as transnational child "fostering" practices among Ghanaian immigrant families and notes that fostering in the West African sense is not based on a Western nuclear family concept. Instead, this entails parenting across a wider distribution of people who assist in the process of childcare, training, and launching the child to adulthood. So, it becomes easier to practice absentee parenting because this arrangement typically fits into a broader, extended-family approach to child-rearing and are thus not necessarily experienced negatively as a type of abandonment. Despite this scenario, findings of Coe's (2012) study did not investigate the impact of these separations on families. Anecdotal evidence showed that younger children seemed to transition more easily than older children into their parents' care upon joining them in the USA after an extended separation. In contrast, two people interviewed spoke of personal situations where children grew up in their home countries and came to the U.S. in their late teens. In both instances, the children stopped talking with their fathers because they did not see eye-to-eye on many things.

Children left behind by immigrant parents were considered as diasporan orphans as shown in Kufakurinani et al. (2014), although typically orphans connote challenging childcare due to the absence of parents. The idea as used in the Zimbabwean study shows some flexibility in capturing the problems created by inadequate or non-existent remittances, abandonment and poverty. Rather in this context, it is perhaps more commonly used to capture cases where resources were adequate or more than adequate, and children who were privileged in financial

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terms. As Mrs. Chinda, a nurse aide at Gweru General Hospital who had witnessed the departure

of so many professional healthcare colleagues expressed, "when parents, especially mothers, go

to the diaspora, their main goal is to elevate the standard of living of their families; however, in

trying to do that they end up spoiling their children." This is because in a bid not to make their

children lack anything, they end up sending in too much money. Dankyi et al. (2017) writing

about a similar scenario in the Ghanaian community claim that immigrant parents give their

children too much access to resources and sometimes do not give enough room for their

children's caregivers to properly discipline and socialize them. In their study of caregivers of

diasporan orphans, it was revealed that most caregivers are relatives whose source of livelihood

depends on the parents of the children that they are caring for, and as a result, they tend not to

exert their authority on matters of discipline for fear of losing the remittances for their upkeep.

Although transnational families make all efforts to be resilient despite the strain of

separation imposed by migration; most of them often use mobile phones so much that their

efforts are dubbed mobile parenting or virtual parenting. Such efforts to connect might not be

entirely useful as an alternative for face-to-face parenting. However, the use of new

communications technologies can facilitate some elements of personal emotional and moral

support. Kufakurinani et al. (2014) mention that some parents practicing distance parenting use

the phone to micro-manage their children's meals, homework and disciplinary issues. However,

the challenges of these new communication technology can be a constraint to most diasporan

parents. Issues such as poor connectivity and inability to manage new communication methods

might impede the achievement of parenting goals. Nonetheless, parents try to stay alert on the

socialization of their children because of the stereotypes about diasporan orphans. These findings

are in synch with the case of Ghanaian diasporan parents where anecdotal evidence shows that

disruptions in electricity supply affect phone communications. Findings from Kufakurinani et al.'s (2014) study hint that disrespect, drug addiction and teenage pregnancies were associated with Zimbabwean diasporan orphans. These circumstances are influenced by their peculiar circumstances and the kind of care available to the child. Some studies assert that children are likely to misbehave if for instance, they are cared for predominantly by housemaids or relatives who largely depend on the benevolence of their diasporan parents to survive. In such situations, a relative may not scold a child for a misdemeanor, bad behavior or disobedience for fear of losing financial remuneration from the child's parents. Thus, a break in communication or inability to manage new technology may not only break the emotional bond between parents and their children but it also affects parental ability to micromanage their children's activities.

Another key reason for leaving children back home or sending them home is to have them learn the language and the cultural values. As earlier indicated, although some immigrant parents move to the diaspora to improve the economic status of their families, the presence of their children may impede or delay their upward mobility. This may motivate the desire to have children remain in their home country. The ability to learn a Ghanaian language is considered by immigrant parents an avenue to inculcate the culture of their people in their children as well as an opportunity to facilitate or foster their sense of belonging.

In as much as the study by Kufakurinani et al. (2014) was relevant for understanding the pros and cons of childcare arrangement-related issues among Zimbabwean immigrants in the UK, it is insufficient for explaining the peculiarity of Ghanaian immigrants in the USA with regards to child-care arrangements during the most intense period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The devastating effects associated with the pandemic were extraordinary. Datta and Biswas

(2021) attest that COVID-19 had a profound impact on transnational families in the United States, particularly with regards to childcare arrangements. In many cases, grandparents or other relatives who typically provide childcare have been unable to do so because of travel restrictions or concerns about exposure to the virus (Hwang and Mahmood, 2020). This has placed a significant burden on working parents, who had to scramble to find alternative childcare solutions (Hwang and Mahmood, 2020). In some cases, parents were forced to take leaves from work in order to stay home with their children. This had a ripple effect on family finances, as well as work-life balance (Wang and Zhao, 2020). It is therefore clear that COVID-19 had a major impact on African transnational families in the United States, and that this impact is likely to continue in the future (Le and Baumeister, 2021). The experiences of Ghanaian immigrant families in the USA on childcare arrangements therefore presents a unique vantage point on the effects of the pandemic that is worth exploring.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach as the researcher dwelled on the epistemology, ontology and axiology of the interpretivist research paradigm to conduct the study (Neuman 2013; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). A total of 20 participants were selected as subjects in the study. The eligibility criteria used for selecting participants were that they should be Ghanaian family immigrants that have lived in the USA for a minimum of seven years. This eligibility criteria was important for garnering reliable information from Ghanaian immigrant families, who have were living their normal lives in the USA for a minimum of five years until the COVID-19 pandemic began. This is because their experiences with COVID-19 regarding childcare arrangements was a deviation from the status quo in the five years before the COVID-

19 pandemic. Due to the intensity of the COVID-19 effects in the USA at the time of data

collection, the snowballing technique was the most appropriate sampling technique. In using the

snowballing technique, the first participant identified provided the researcher with the contacts of

other Ghanaian immigrant families in the USA who could be approached as research subjects.

This strategy was used until the researcher arrived at a saturation point of 20 respondents. Three

categories of respondents were interviewed. These were: i) parents who had sent children home;

ii) parents who were receiving childcare from relatives and iii) parents who had to pay for

childcare and those who had little or no help as a result of the pandemic. In this regard, a total of

20 telephone interviews were conducted. Two focus group discussions consisting of eight

participants in each group were conducted on Zoom. The use of telephone interviews and Zoom

focus group discussions was due to the high rate of COVID-19 infections and deaths in the USA

at the time the data was gathered. Telephone interviews and Zoom focus group discussions

helped surmount challenges that face-to-face interactions could present for both the researcher

and participants. These included the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus and possible

fatalities. The telephone interviews, although ethical and efficient as a preventive measure

against contracting the COVID-19 virus, were bedeviled with the challenge of not having the

opportunity to examine the facial expression and other body language of participants during

interviews. To address this challenge, the researcher resorted to the use of video calls in some

circumstances where it was appropriate to do so. Phone interviews and video interviews were

recorded by the researcher and later transcribed and analyzed. Furthermore, the timeframe for

conducting the Zoom focus group discussions was prolonged since most of the participants were

not used to some features, such as knowing when to mute and unmute their speakers. The use of

the Zoom technology enabled the researcher to record the Zoom meetings for the two focus

group discussions. The themes relevant to achieving research objectives were identified from the data gathered from interviews and focus group discussions. They were then analyzed to discern the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on childrearing by Ghanaian diaspora families in the USA.

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Findings

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Childcare Strategies within the Ghanaian Context and Ghanaians in the Diaspora

The childcare strategies among Ghanaians in the diaspora are largely similar to those in their home country. Scholars writing on the childcare strategies among Ghanaians suggest that most Ghanaian households use high levels of informal childcare, principal among which were the reliance on family support (Oppong 2004; Badasu 2012; Afrifa 2018). Although such family childcare has been fraught with challenges due to social and economic changes, several adaptations have been made to it. One of the key adjustments to this arrangement is the monetary aspect. In the past, childcare was not paid for but given in reciprocity for other services and considered an obligation of family members.

In a study conducted among three geographically distinct social groups in Accra, Ghana, Afrifa (2018) classifies childcare into four categories. These are: non-formal care arrangements, semi-formal family care arrangements, semi-formal non-kin care arrangements and formal care arrangements. According to the study, informal childcare was the first choice for most families when it came to childcare. In this sense, there was reliance on grandmothers (both maternal and paternal), siblings of parents, aunts, uncles, older siblings. In some instances, church members,

work apprentices, friends and colleagues at work (depending on their availability) were used. The motivation for using this option was the emotional security it gave parents and the flexibility of time (that a child spent in care) that this strategy could give.

Findings from the current study revealed that the childcare options explored by Ghanaian parents in the diaspora also combine informal and formal care. Informal care options include the use of family (grandmothers, siblings, aunts), and friends. Formal care options employ many forms of day care and paid non-family caregivers. Of all these arrangements, the most common is the use of family care. It is also believed to be most reliable. In this case, as other studies have indicated, parents either send their children back to Ghana or invite a family member to the USA to assist them in childcare provision (Coe 2011). Given the context of the study, findings of this section will be categorized under two major themes. First is the categorization of care givers and second, the objectives sought in caregiving. It is evidenced from this study that the kinds of care providers that parents explored were a) blood kinship (siblings, parents, and in-laws) and b) neighbors and fellow countrymen/women.

In terms of the categorization of caregivers, the study found blood kinship to be the most utilized form of childcare options. One of the key reasons for this option is the flexibility associated with it. Some respondents share their views this way:

> When my children were younger, my husband and I agreed that my mother comes in to stay with us and assist with taking care of the children. We do not have a fixed amount that we pay her but from time to time we give her some money (Oforiwaa, Worcester, September 2, 2021).

My husband's mother (I mean my mother-in-law) helps us to take care of our four

boys. We used to send them to Ghana when they were a year old or more. But we

were able to file for her and she now lives with us and supports us with childcare.

When she was in Ghana, we used to send her money for the children's upkeep. But

now that she is here, we only take care of her rent and other bills. (Mavis, Columbus,

September 4, 2021)

Currently, my sister's husband is still not here. She has filed for him but the process

has delayed because of COVID-19. So, I assist her to take care of their two children.

We have scheduled our work time in a way that allows at least one of us to be

available all the time for the children (Josephine, New York, October 10, 2021).

From the above perspectives of the respondents who were receiving care from relatives, or

offering care, it was observed that kin support from grandparents and siblings of parents is useful

and important for childcare. In the case of Mavis of Columbus, the relationship between the

children and their grandmother was established before she moved to the USA to take care of

them. Although several studies (Badasu 2012) in Ghana show prevalence in the use of maternal

grandmothers instead of paternal grandmothers, the latter happened for Mavis because as she

further explained, her own mother was deceased. This finding about the children establishing an

existing relationship with the grandmother before her arrival in the USA corroborates with what

Dankyi et al. (2017) claim. According to these scholars, it was a normal practice for Ghanaian

parents in the diaspora to send their children back home to be taken care of by their

grandmothers and other relatives until the parents were better positioned to bring them back to

the USA.

In the absence of family care, other informal networks are utilised. These include

subsidized nanny care through informal networks provided by friends and neighbours. This

applies to the category of respondents who had to pay for childcare. In one instance, a friend's

mother who is at home taking care of her grandchildren was asked to help with childcare.

> My friend, Ama's mum (Aunty Akua) got the chance to come to the USA after she
>
> had her child. And since Aunty Akua was always home, my husband and I spoke with
>
> Ama to ask her mum to assist us. She agreed to do it, so we drop off our children in
>
> their house each morning before going to work. We do not pay her much; we give her
>
> a token at the end of every month (Naana, New York,October 15, 2021).

Naana's case is similar to that of many other Ghanaians who mentioned in interviews that

this option of using parents of friends as caregivers was considered reliable. Although the

caregiver is not related by blood, as an older woman she was considered experienced enough to

provide the necessary care that will promote the culturally appropriate conceptualization of the

well-being of the child. Apart from this, this option is affordable and flexible on hours, as parents

do not feel compelled to work within strict arrangements that may also be more expensive or

unaffordable.

Another dimension to this arrangement is older women/grandmothers who provide

subsidized nanny/care services. These women do not only take care of Ghanaian children but

provide childcare for other Black children whose parents may not be able to afford formal

daycare. One of such women is Araba, a grandmother in Columbus. Her daughter Abena

brought her to the USA to support childcare but she extends it to other children for a fee. The

payment is on a sliding scale based on the relationship with those who referred the parents to the nanny, and what relationship the former has with the nanny. So, Araba puts it thus:

> I charge those I do not know much $15 but because of Akwasi (Abena's husband's friend) who sent you here, I will take $10 for each child. I know we have all travelled here and we need to support one another (Araba, Columbus, November 4, 2021).

There is also the reliance on siblings or friends on vacation. This appeared to be another form of support that parents could rely on. Abena explained that her children felt very comfortable with her friend's younger sister who was in college. She said: 'Akosua gets along well with my children. She helps them with their homework and also plays with them. Sometimes she braids my daughter's hair too. Claudia and Kofi always tell me, "Akosua is a good person."

Several effects were enumerated for both kinship and non-kinship care. These include the strengthening of family ties and bonds, providing assistance with learning languages, and help with homework. Study participants revealed that there are several reasons and objectives for desiring blood kinship for childcare support, these include the notion that family brings in emotional support and peace of mind, and the convenience of flexible hours possible with using family care compared with day care or other forms of care. The use of family childcare is essential because most parents consider it was an avenue of transmitting family norms and values through socialisation. One key desire involved in the effort to transmit Ghanaian culture, is building language skills, which it is believed, can be more easily developed using family childcare. In this sense, the caregiver and parents of the child form a community that cam immerse the child in an environment that facilitates learning a Ghanaian language.

My mother is playing a good role here. She speaks Twi with them. Although the children do not speak fluently, they understand it (Oforiwaa, Worcester, September 2, 2021).

I feel happy anytime I see my children speak Ga and Twi. It was part of the reasons why I sent them to Ghana, so they become competent in the language (Mercy, New York, October 17, 2021).

As mentioned above, in the absence of family care, other informal networks are utilised. These include affordable nanny care secured through informal networks. In this context, older women considered experienced with childcare were sought out by parents as an option. In this regard, a friend's mother who is a stay home caregiver to her grandchildren can be asked to help with childcare and also assists with socialisation.

The reliance on neighbours and friends among these Ghanaians in the diaspora is typical of the Ghanaian culture back home. Preference for these strategies stems from the notion that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Thus, despite the new geographical location and attendant socio-cultural changes, this notion of communal childcare still prevails among Ghanaians. With all these arrangements, ample support was provided for childcare either from Ghana or in the USA among transnational families. However, the COVID-19 pandemic imposed different dynamics and challenges that the next section will discuss.

Childcare Strategies and Complexities in the COVID-19 Pandemic Era

The COVID-19 pandemic started in November 2019 and resulted in major economic, social, and cultural challenges. Following the high rates of infection and the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO), several measures were put in place to

reduce the rate of infection and curtail the high mortality rates globally. Some key policies include the imposition of a travel ban, lockdowns, and stay-home restrictions. These measures automatically put a strict limitations on movement, and this affected transnational families in different ways.

Generally, movement from Africa to the West is fraught with challenges. Coe (2011) shows that families have challenges with applying for visas for their kinfolk to visit for purposes of offering support with childcare. The key reason for this is the different conceptualization ideals of childcare in the West. In one of the situations that a Ghanaian family respondent discussed, the rationale for travel given to the embassy was support with childcare. This became grounds for visa refusal. According to the embassy, childcare was considered work and the kind of visa being applied for was not appropriate for that. Despite the already existing difficulties, this study revealed that the travel ban as well as lockdowns impacted a respondent's ability to secure a visa for mother to get to the USA to help her with childcare. She explains:

> So, I filed for my mum to come in to assist me with the childcare since this was my second child and I was overwhelmed with combining childcare and working. However, her visa appointment got cancelled because the USA Embassy in Ghana was closed as a result of COVID-19. I was so disturbed (Maame, Columbus, November 5, 2021).

This situation was also the same for others who had secured visas but could not travel due to the ban on non-essential travel.

My aunty was supposed to come early on to support me with childcare. But then my

grandmother passed on and she rescheduled her visit to end of March because I was

due early April. Everything came as a shock to me when I couldn't do much. I started

thinking about how I was going to manage without any family support. With the

COVID-19, people were afraid to get into other people's homes and my husband and

I had to manage when the baby finally came (Gloria, Worcester, November 7, 2021).

Accounts of the challenges and traumatic situations caused by the effects of the pandemic

on childcare arrangements made the researcher inquire about the coping strategies parents used

in to address the problematic situation. Gloria responded that she relied extensively on phone

calls for directions on what to do with the newborn. Despite the experience with her first child,

she still needed some support from time to time.

During the focus group discussions, the challenges of the pandemic to childcare were

highlighted. One theme that evolved was how childcare practices in the diaspora lack the

elements that made childcare back home meaningful and effective. These include the

contributions due to social capital such as affordability, flexibility, culturally appropriate

socialization less parental anxiety. Research subjects also emphasized the fact that the COVID-

19 pandemic further worsened the situation. This is evident in the thoughts expressed by

respondents:

The way childcare is organized here is so different from the way it happens back

home. It is such a joy to have a child and the whole extended family plays a role in

their care. But here it is just you and your husband (practically your nuclear family).

If you decide to take your child to a nanny, it is very expensive (Joyce, FGD,

Worcester, November 12, 2021).

In response to Joyce's thoughts about the expensive nature of formal childcare facilities,

Agnes mentioned that there were other subsidized options for most immigrants through friends

and church networks.

We all know that formal childcare is very expensive, and one might even end up

using almost their entire pay check in order to afford it. But as we may all be aware,

most African parents use the informal networks from stay-home grandmothers and

sometimes friends. We pay them tokens or some agreed rate of a sort. But with this

pandemic, and its accompanying stay-home policy, that option could no longer be

explored (Agnes, FGD, Worcester, November 10, 2021).

I had my first child in Ghana before relocating to the USA with my husband. When I

had the second child here, it was a whole different experience from what I had back

home. So, my husband and I always thought of bringing in family members from

Ghana to support. We filed for my mum to come as we were planning for our third

child. Unfortunately, the pandemic slowed everything down. Although my mum got

the visa, the ban on travel affected her ability to come when I needed her most!

(Gyasiwaa, FGD, Columbus, November 12, 2021).

The pandemic also resulted in difficulties with return visits. The ability of parents who

return home from time to time to see their children was badly affected. The case of Linda is a

typical example.

My husband and I decided to send our three children to Ghana and pay them visits

from time to time. We take turns to visit our children. He visited them for Christmas

in 2019 and I was supposed to go in Spring 2020. So, in 2020, I had already booked

my ticket and was getting ready to go see them. But the flights were cancelled,

airports were closed during the period I wanted to go. I could not be at my daughter's

birthday. I sent her gifts, but it did not feel the same. I wanted to be physically

present, but the situation could not allow it (Linda, Worcester, September 10, 2021).

The routine and normal ways in which transnational families are managed and maintained

gets disrupted when parents are unable to undertake return visits (Poeze and Dankyi 2017).

Return visits are essential for both parents and children. They provide opportunities for parents

to do welfare checks on their children that gives them firsthand insights and knowledge of what

is happening in the lives of their children and their caregivers. The inability of parents to travel

back home to visit their children puts a strain on both parents' and children. Children's

expectations are not met and this may affect their emotional well-being. Akosua of New York

explained:

Although my children are being taken care of by my mother and my mother-in-law, I

still cannot just leave them in Ghana and stay in the USA without periodic visits to

see how they are faring. I perfectly trust the two caregivers to take good care of my

children, but my children still need to see me from time to time (Akosua, New York,

September 15, 2021).

Responses from the FGD also hinted that the key motivation for the return visit was not

limited to just going to check on their caregivers. It was also an important indicator of how the

relationship between their children was faring. According to Lilian, she had left behind three children with the oldest child being 13 years old, and the youngest, five.

> I have a distant cousin who takes care of them. My husband lives in Ghana with them. But my oldest daughter always feels like she is the "mother" of the home. I get reports from time to time about her trying to bully her younger siblings. She always feels she is in charge. So, my regular visits help to manage this situation (Lilian, FGD, Columbus, November 12, 2022).

The emotional security and trust attached to the family childcare option give most parents ample assurance that the health and wellbeing of their children will always be ensured. So, as parents, they can have the peace of mind to focus on their work abroad.

One could surmise that during the pandemic, there was a restriction on movements and parents were compelled to stay home with their children. This period gave most families the chance to bond with one another. Although some businesses shut down, when they opened up gradually, most workers had to work from home. But the findings of this study suggest how much of a distraction this was to working parents, especially mothers. Mothers bore the burden of much of this care because care was woman-centered (Dayl 2011; Folbre 2001). In this regard, since mothers tended to be around their children most, and had primary responsibility to care for their needs, mothers had multiple burdens. They struggled to combine childcare, working from home, and meeting children's educational needs. This was clear from research subjects' observations.

Initially, it was manageable because we were all staying home and not working. But

when my work resumed, the children were doing online learning. Every time I need

to pause my work to assist them from time to time. This slows me down and I am

always behind schedule (Rita, Worcester, September 12, 2020).

These kids will never go to their dad! Even if we are both home everything is about

mummy… Mummy we want chips. Can we have cereal? So, every time I am behind

schedule with my tasks at work (Afia, Columbus, October 15, 2020).

These observations are corroborate what existing literature highlights about the burden of

care being woman-centered Buabeng (2010) and Poeze et al. (2017). Some fathers were involved

in childcare. For example, data collected from Yaw suggested his active participation in

providing care for his three children.

My wife is a healthcare worker. There was no break for her. I had to stay home and

even when we were asked to work from home, I ended quitting my job. This is

because my wife's mum who helps us with childcare had travelled to Ghana and

could not return because of the travel restrictions. I support my kids with their online

learning and their day-to-day activities (Yaw, New York, October 17, 2021).

This case can further be compared to the work of Poeze et al. (2017) about transnational

families in the Netherlands indicate that fathers sometimes shift from traditional gender roles in

response to the exigencies of the migrant life. Thus, roles typically described as feminine, such

as childcare are adopted by men when couples migrate. Buabeng (2010) contends that married

couples who internally migrate to the big cities in Ghana are usually involved in gender role

reversal due to the exigencies of urban life. In Afrifa's 2018 study on childcare in Accra, she

corroborates Buabeng (2010) that in contrast to their culturally defined gender roles, fathers in this urban Ghanaian setting were actively involved in the care of their children.

Conclusion

This paper sought to discuss the complexities of childcare among Ghanaian parents in the USA at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from the study suggested that besides the already existing difficulties associated with travelling from Africa to the West, restrictions on human movement globally because of the pandemic affected transnational childcare negatively. Parents who send their children back home for family care have difficulties doing so. Similarly, parents' return visits for important events in their children's lives were also curtailed. Unfortunately, families also could not invite their relatives over to help with childcare as they used to do routinely before the pandemic. Findings suggest that the situation was further worsened by stay-at-home policies that made it difficult for mothers to even take their children to informal care networks that were available to them in the USA. The fact that children had to be involved in online learning further compounded the situation for everyone, especially mothers, since the constant distraction from their children negatively affected their productivity. Although the pandemic offered an opportunity for families to bond together, it also made the already daunting task of childcare and maintaining transnational family relationships more complex. These challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions disrupted, complicated, and stymied many of the established forms of social capital (kinship and non-kinship) that made childcare possible and effective.

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Investigating the Vulnerability of Foreign Migrants Businesses in Durban, South Africa,

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

There is lack of empirical evidence on the vulnerability of immigrant businesses in Durban, South Africa, during the COVID-19 pandemic. To investigate this, data was collected during the pandemic to evaluate the vulnerability of immigrant businesses. The research adopted the quantitative approach, with a sample of fifty-three (53) Durban city immigrants small-scale business owners, to examine their business vulnerability. A linear regression model and correlation were used to analyse the data. The findings show that business insecurity increased immigrants' business vulnerability. Thus, without underestimating the COVID-19 pandemic effect, it was evident that urban insecurity resulting in xenophobic tendencies and incidences is the main factor/determinant/predictor that increases the vulnerability of foreign businesses. The study suggests that the documentation and analysis of foreign immigrants' experiences during the

COVID-19 pandemic can contribute to understanding the effects and consequences for immigrants across the globe. The study contributes to debates on immigrants' inclusion and seeks to fill the gap in the literature on immigrant business experience and survival in host communities.

Introduction

The role of self-owned businesses and entrepreneurship in improving household livelihood cannot be underestimated. However, survival in such an environment may be impossible or limited in situations with negative externalities. Such externalities in the context of this study touch on the social (xenophobia, crime, insecurity, business attacks, exclusion) and/or medical (COVID-19 outbreak) pandemic that continues to undermine the growth and success of foreign migrant businesses (see: Porta, 2014; Madhav et al., 2017; Pfister, 2020; Manik, 2020; Ikwegbue et al., 2021). Thus, this study's conceptualization of the pandemic touches on the social externalities that shape foreign businesses during the COVID-19 (a medical) pandemic. For instance, adaptation to a new market and survival within a non-inclusive space remains a significant challenge for the economic sustainability of foreign-owned businesses in South Africa. While foreign multinationals are open to divergent adaptation mechanisms to access

existing and emerging markets and make headway (Dawar and Frost, 1999), small-scale

businesses are vulnerable to shocks, perhaps due to the exorbitant costs of adapting and

responding to shocks.

Kasimoglu (2018) argues that business ethics and environmental factors can be both

limitation and advantage to business success. This, in the context of this study, connotes an

unconscious threat to existing and new business entrants. One such threat of environmental

limitation to the survival of foreign businesses is the entrepreneurial obstacle from host countries

(Chrysostome and Arcand, 2009). Issues around divergent ethnic identity, discrimination,

integration, and social cohesion (Gaffikin and Morrissey, 2011; Algan et al., 2012; Saggar et al.,

2012; Spoonley, 2014; Akande et al., 2018; Oucho and Williams, 2019; Magazzini, 2021) by

host communities against the immigrants remain threatening to the survival of foreign migrants'

businesses. Despite the relevance of immigrant businesses to job creation and collective national

development, experience in Cape Town, South Africa, revealed that crime and jealousy (as

exhibited in xenophobic activities) are negative externalities to immigrant business success

(Khosa & Kalitanyi, 2014; Tengeh, 2013).

The proposition and underlying question are whether xenophobic incidence and city

insecurity (business place safety) were more of a pandemic than financial-related stress that led

to increased business collapse among immigrant businesses in Durban City during the COVID-

19 pandemic. Many scholars have categorized varying dimensions of xenophobia as a pandemic.

From Asian cultural assimilation and segregation (Reny and Barreto, 2020) to the racial

totalitarian form of xenophobia as experienced in the United Kingdom (Dempsey, 2021),

immigrant segregation remains a global city challenge. Explaining the pandemic of xenophobia,

Cheng (2020) and Chou and Gaysynsky (2021) alluded to the stress and attacks (physical, social,

and mental) experienced during the pandemic by foreign migrants. These studies provide evidence on the effects of racism, and stigma on the activities of individuals and institutions. Threats to liveability, security, and safety are manifested. Cheng (2020:13) and White (2021) documented that the mental and physical health and exclusion of Asian communities and foreign migrants will continue to be at risk due to racial prejudice during the COVID-19 pandemic. The racial profiling and xenophobic incidences are expected to result in the manifestation of ethnic crimes against particular groups.

The vulnerable group focused upon in this study are immigrant businesses within Durban City. Esses and Hamilton (2021) proposed that there is a need to examine immigrants' (migrant business owners in Durban) perceptions of belonging (spatial, social, and physical) and experiences of racism and xenophobia in the face of anti-immigrant attitudes. As Lata (2020) puts it, this brings to the fore, the question: to who does the city belong? This is critical in the relationship of immigrants with host communities. It interrogates the vulnerability of immigrant livelihood endeavours and businesses.

This study extends beyond the externalities caused by the global medical pandemic resulting from COVID-19 and how it increased immigrant business vulnerability. Irastorza and Peña-Legazkue (2018) documented that foreign-owned businesses were likely to collapse and close up during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the 'foreignness' liability. Conceptualised by the authors as 'business vulnerability', this foreignness liability can be in the form of discrimination, limited access to institutional supports, lack of human and social capital, and, as postulated by Lefebvre (1996), a limited or restricted right to the city.

In the context of a foreign business owner, the right to the city is restricted access to market and livelihood opportunities. Vis-à-vis the position that the functioning of a city is embedded in the movement and flow of goods, services, and people (local and foreign migrants inclusive). However, the reality in Durban suggests that the mobility and access of people (most especially in the economic spaces of the city) presents a dichotomy between local residents and foreign migrants. This implies a limited right to the city and exclusion among immigrant business owners despite their role in its functioning, thus raising the perception that various disruptive elements limit migrants' access to the city. This disruptive element can be physical, social, economic, cultural, or environmental. Over the years, studies (Maharaj, 2009; Gebhardt, 2016; Nicholls and Vermeulen, 2017; Hewidy, 2022) have presented evidence of the choice and struggle of indigenous residents as to the ownership and co-ownership of city spaces. This has resulted in hostilities between local residents and foreign migrants. For instance, the socio-politics of xenophobic activities has emerged as an agenda to define who accesses or 'owns' a city—suggesting the notion that local residents own the city space.

In the face of multi-scale, dimensional, and sectoral disrupting agents such as the COVID-19 pandemic, this study asks whether the immigrant business vulnerability experience is static. Iterating the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, studies have reported massive global disruptions in supply chain and trading, income and revenue, inflation, and production, a global decline of about 60 *percent* in gross domestic product (GDP) (Baldwin and di Munro, 2020; The International Civil Aviation Organization, 2020; Barau, 2020). In South Africa, Arndt et al. (2020) reported that the pandemic conditions and the reactionary approach by the government have impacted household incomes and reduced the use of capital by about 40

percent. The author argues that economic stress from the pandemic continues to limit the economic sustainability of the lockdown in the country.

Rajagopaul et al. (2020) argued that with South African Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), already contending with a contracting economy, additional shocks from COVID-19 are putting further pressure on their operations. Some such opposing forces among foreign business owners are the negativities from their city access or 'right to the city' experiences. The COVID-19 shock is expected to lead to the closure of about sixty *percent* of SMEs in the country. Many of these are owned and operated by immigrants. Fatoki and Chiliya (2012) report that many SMEs are owned and operated by foreign nationals. They are disproportionately affected by the high unemployment rate in the country, a condition exacerbated by the formal job restrictions for immigrants. Radipere and Dhliwayo (2014) point out that immigrant businesses make up about 2.5 *percent* of the total number of businesses, and the immigrant population is about 3 *percent* of the total population. Immigrant businesses are estimated to account for about 2 *percent* of new business start-ups.

The COVID-19 pandemic trimmed down the potential of foreign-owned businesses. Bisong et al. (2020) mentioned that the pandemic-induced recession resulted in job losses, decline in monetary value, lower income loss of capacity to make and receive remittances, and migrant business collapse. However, the migrant business losses in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic remains mostly undocumented.

This study is explorative. The study aims to examine immigrant business vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic in Durban, South Africa. The authors question whether immigrant businesses are still vulnerable (and how much) amid a global disrupting agent such as

the COVID-19 pandemic. The interest is not to underplay the negative effects of COVID-19 but rather, to question whether there are indicators (classed as social pandemics) that keenly or more importantly, promote the vulnerability of small businesses among immigrants in Durban, most especially due to the increased and reported cases of immigrant attacks in the city. This accounted for the pandemic-era data collection on immigrants' business vulnerability in Durban, South Africa.

The Right to the City Theory and Foreign Migrants Businesses

The idea of access to the city is advocated in the theory of the right to the city. The pride and functionality of cities are embedded in their safety, access, and use. The "right to the city" demands an end to the exclusion between social classes that are decorated in the urban spatial order (Lefebvre, 1996). While the line between the freedom to enjoy and use neighbourhood space and the point at which such enjoyment trespasses on the enjoyment and rights of others, a serious focus is needed to settle and manage planning and development (Chaskin and Joseph, 2010). Community dynamics around behaviour norms, social control, and the use of space are produced by bringing together people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds in certain settings (Chaskin and Joseph, 2010). The right to the city theory contradicts the new social movement theory, which stresses that to be transformative, a social movement requires a sustained cooperative identity with reasonably well-defined boundaries (Dian and Porta, 2006).

The right to the city entails the removal of well-defined boundaries of social movements to incorporate groups into social settings. This contributes to the attenuation of collective identity. In South Africa, for example, Huchzermeyer (2014) presented an argument about the informal configuration of inequality and class-based segregation in the economy of

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Johannesburg. However, there is silence on the role that immigrant businesses play in making the city. De Graauw and Vermeulen, (2016) and Carpio et al. (2011) observe that the lived experience of immigrants in cities and suburban communities is essential to their integration into host communities. They recognize that cities as a locus of immigration are based on foreign migrants' knowledge of social acceptability and ease of adventure. Grant and Thompson (2015) report the imaginary inner-city restriction experienced by informal immigrant businesses in Johannesburg. The study recognised the geography of city exclusion against foreign business migrants. This experience contradicts the assumption that the prowess and economic capacity of migrants from their entrepreneurial abilities would privilege them in access to the right to the city. Further, the business vulnerability among immigrants (recognised in the Asian-African immigrant business cluster and niche) is potentially intensified by city business insecurity and xenophobic incidences. Drawing from Congolese refugees' divergent business security experiences in Kampala, Lyytinen (2015) wrote that Ugandan businesses benefit more from business security in the city than Congolese refugees. Thus, immigrant groups experiences are not necessarily homogeneous.

Theoretically, the right to the city is intended to advance the welfare of the entire community and primarily the persons who occupy it (Lefebvre, 1996). These community persons include immigrants within the urban space. This, therefore, gives freedom to city occupants to be liberal. However, it disadvantages other users because there are no limitations and restrictions enumerated in Lefebvre's perspective. Appropriation embraces the right of dwellers to access, inhabit, and use city space tangibly. This perception has been the crucial emphasis of scholars who support people's right to be present in city spaces (Capron, 2002; Purcell, 2002; Mitchell and Staeheli, 2002, 2013). Recognising this, Grant and Thompson (2015:182) reported that in

South Africa, a limited understanding of the perceived high-crime and xenophobic environments within which most African immigrant entrepreneurs operate, limit their access, use, and integration in such spaces. The spatial and economic struggle is presumably mainly driven by the immigrant-locals economic clash and competition for city dominancy. An experience that Maharaj (2009) adapted from Mitchell (2003) is termed "the struggle of the streets." This dominancy is caused by the right to city being asserted as legitimate for indigenous South Africans but not for foreign migrants. Reiterating the struggle of immigrants in the city, Bhowmik and Saha (2013) wrote that financial exploitation and segregation of immigrants in the city cannot be ignored. This was said to be exercerbated by their limited skills and education, which the authors noted further restricted this group to informal economic spaces in the city. Consequently, their access to, ownership of, and utilisation of the city are further limited. This, we argue, along with the role economic and/or market areas in the city, becomes a space for freedom and production for foreign migrants (see Cabannes & Raposo, 2013).

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative approach. The post-positivist research strategy was based on administered structured questionnaires. This exploratory research design study used data from foreign business owners to examine business vulnerability among small and medium-scale business owners in Durban. In this study, samples were drawn using non-probability sampling techniques. The choice of non-probability sampling was due to a lack of reliable data on the number of immigrant business owners in South Africa. The purposive sample of fifty-three immigrants who engaged in small and medium-scale businesses was drawn from Durban. Purposive sampling was necessitated by the attendant conditions and environment. First, the number of immigrant businesses (Statistics South Africa. 2010; Radipere & Dhliwayo, 2014;

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Chetty & Sherefedin, 2018) and their trading history have remained vaguely estimated. Further, there are limitations arising from the informality characterizing many immigrant businesses in South Africa.

The use of a non-probabilistic sample was due to the peculiarity of the study respondents being foreigners coping with high levels of precarity. In the face of the reported cases of xenophobic activities and police harassment, the study used a non-probabilistic (purposive) sample procedure. Purposive sampling allows for the targeted drawing of respondents who are actors or participants in the phenomenon being investigated. This sampling procedure allowed us to overcome data collection challenges, such as police harassment and data misrepresentation by non-foreign business owners. Thus, the fifty-three immigrant business owners were drawn purposively along various road corridors and places known to have significant presence of foreign businesses in Durban. Many of the foreign business owners were drawn from areas such as Berea Centre, Broad Street, King Pixley Corridor Road, City Centre-Workshop, South Beach, and Point area. Many of these businesses were concentrated along the city centre and close to fellow foreign communities. The commodities sold and services provided by the sample businesses included fashion materials, clothing, food, internet services, and automobile servicing. The regional distribution countries of origin of the sampled respondents is presented below (see Table 1).

Table 1: Regions of Sample Immigrants' Countries of Origin

Country Classification	No.	%

Southern Africa	18	34.0
Eastern Africa	8	15.1
Western Africa	24	45.3
Non-African	3	5.7
Total	**53**	**100.0**

This study conducted linear regression analysis to examine variables that could explain business vulnerability among immigrant business owners in Durban, South Africa. Data for this study were collected during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The data collection period was between August and September 2020. The authors recognised the underlying psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as an aspect of the business vulnerability of immigrant business owners in Durban, South Africa. Inferences were drawn from existing literature and presented in the study discussion and conclusion.

Conceptualisation of the Study Hypothesis

Response Variable: Immigrant Business Vulnerability

The variables and indicators for measuring business vulnerability (ZBVC) (Figure 1) were captured thematically based on existing study literature. These variables included the

general business environment of Durban, the scale of experience and exposure of businesses to xenophobic activity, and the rating of how the pandemic increased tendencies to poverty and livelihood shocks for the migrants and their households. Studies including (Khosa and Kalitanyi, 2014; Mantzaria and Ngacame, 2019) show that the pandemic contributed to increased incidence of criminality and consequent threat of business collapse that foreign nationals in KwaZulu-Natal and Cape Town Province face.

Mantzaria and Ngacame's (2019) contend that negative external competition between the foreign and indigenous businesses in the Provinces could not be downplayed. The analysis in this study points to the vulnerability tendencies and criminalities that shock immigrant businesses in South Africa and suggests a 'state-supported' attack on foreign businesses and migrants. Consequently, economic exclusion is experienced among foreign traders in the city. This study considers whether financial inclusion, security, and safety perception of foreign migrants can explain immigrant business vulnerability. The perception of 'failed or weak' peaceful cohabitation, tolerance, and social dialogue in South Africa (Sithole and Dinbabo, 2016) were found to erode business security and survival among immigrants.

Figure 1. Hypothetical Prediction of Immigrant Business Vulnerability in Durban

Explanatory Variables: Immigrant Business Safety and Security and Financial Inclusion

Failed co-habitation was reflected in cases of immigrant business looting over the years. As shown by Misago (2016), this remains a long-term indicator of the vulnerability and shocks to which migrant business owners are exposed. The exposure to xenophobic activities (Sithole and Dinbabo, 2016) were related to poverty and household livelihood. Non-South African business owners have over the years, been induced into forced closure of their businesses for days due to fear of attacks (Tshishonga, 2015), looting, and death threats. There was evidence and suggestive indicators of the continued vulnerability of foreign businesses in South Africa. A literature review, taking into consideration the study setting (Durban, South Africa), was used to derive the indicators for the independent variables of business financial inclusion (ZBFI) and business security and safety (ZBSS).

Business financial inclusion (ZBFI) was measured based on access of foreign business to the entire business sector in the city, immigrant business owners' access to business loans and support, and the level of benefit the business relief that immigrant businesses enjoyed from the government pre- and during COVID-19 pandemic. Business financial inclusion remains critical to foreign business success and growth. Financial business capital is vital to business performance. Nonetheless, Huang and Liu (2019) state that there is limited knowledge about foreign entrepreneurs' financial access to opportunities in cities across the globe. They argue that financial support and access into the city by immigrant businesses and entrepreneurs are key inclusionary and integrating strategies. Fatoki (2014) contends that immigrant businesses in South Africa are dependent on informal credit support sources. For him, these labour and capital market-related challenges are limiting to business growth, successful integration of foreign businesses, and immigrants' integration into the host communities. The lack of support for immigrant businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the challenges experienced. Drawing on the South African experience of immigrants, Ayuk (2022) reported that the pandemic, rather than being a 'great equaliser,' further exposed the exclusion and inequality that affects immigrants living in the country. This was termed a "covert relief administration discrimination" in the country (Ayuk, 2022).

The business security and safety (ZBSS) construct captured included the business environment's safety, the benefit of any business relief by the private sector/NGOs, and the frequency of xenophobic attacks and foreigner-exclusion activities. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2020) argued for certain standards of living and business operation criteria to denote business safety and security. Immigrants' safety and security was framed as including the physical, social, and economic dimensions. Considering the need to

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improve the business environment in South Africa, Rogerson and Rogerson (2010) drawing from a sample of foreign business investors, argued that local authorities must improve business safety and security in the city. They argued that crime and insecurity incidences against foreign businesses remain a push from any city and reported that xenophobic tendencies cause as well as intensify urban insecurity. Thus, limited foreign business safety remains a common social and economic threat to immigrant business, and jeopardizes their success. Crush and Ramachandran (2015:27) reported that trying to run a business in South Africa remains a hazardous undertaking for foreigners as there is a widespread perception that migrant entrepreneurial activities inevitably disadvantage South Africans. This perception is what produces hostile rhetoric, competition, and xenophobic actions against foreign businesses. Consequently, threats to immigrant business and livelihood vulnerability increase.

Study Findings and Result: Demographic Characteristics Sample Immigrants

The study sample revealed that many of the business owners were from West Africa (mainly Nigerian and Ghanaians). Evidence presented in Table 2 shows that 50.9% of the sample migrated from other Southern African nations. This aligns with Popoola et al.'s (2020b) argument that Southern Africa remains a major immigration and emigration zone in Africa. Another factor that accounted for the low numbers of North African immigrants can be attributed to language barriers and fear of victimisation.

Many of the sampled respondents were males and single. The ease of mobility and migration among singles has been well documented (Compton & Pollak, 2007; Huber & Nowotny, 2013; Tano et al., 2018; Migali & Scipioni, 2019). It was reported, as evidenced in the study, that single males often stay longer in South Africa. This assumption aligns with the

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exodus of immigrants with families from South Africa in 2019 (Adnan, 2019; Adebayo, 2019), following the outbreak of xenophobic attacks (Idemudia et al., 2013).

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Country of last Migration			Length of Stay in South Africa		
Variable	Frequency	Percent	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Southern Africa	27	50.9	**1 to 3 years**	12	22.6
Eastern Africa	8	15.1	**4 to 6 years**	11	20.8
Western Africa	15	28.3	**7 to 10 years**	11	20.8
Non-African	3	5.7	**Above 10 years**	19	35.8
Total	53	100.0	Total	53	100.0
Gender			**Marital Status**		
Male	38	71.7	**Single**	34	64.2
Female	15	28.3	**Married**	19	35.8
Total	53	100.0	Total	53	100.0

Study Findings and Result: Relational Analysis of Variables that Explain Business

Vulnerability among Immigrants in Durban, South Africa

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A linear regression analysis was conducted to assess whether business financial inclusion (ZBFI) and business security and safety (ZBSS) significantly predicted business vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic (ZBVC). The results of the linear regression model was significant, $F(2,50) = 8.71$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.26$, indicating that approximately 26% of the variance in ZBVC was explainable by ZBFI and ZBSS. ZBFI did not significantly predict ZBVC, $p = .587$. Based on this sample, a one-unit increase in ZBFI does not significantly affect ZBVC. ZBSS significantly predicted ZBVC, $B = 0.50$, $p < .001$. This indicates that on average, a one-unit increase of ZBSS will increase the value of ZBVC by 0.50 units. Table 3 summarizes the results of the regression model.

Table 3: Results for Linear Regression with Business Financial Inclusion and Business Security and Safety predicting Business Vulnerability during COVID-19

Variable	B	SE	95% CI	B	T	p
(Intercept)	-0.00	0.12	[-0.24, 0.24]	0.00	-0.00	1.000
ZBFI	0.07	0.12	[-0.18, 0.31]	0.07	0.55	.587
ZBSS	0.50	0.12	[0.25, 0.74]	0.50	4.07	< .001

Note. Results: $F(2,50) = 8.71$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.26$

Unstandardized Regression Equation: ZBVC = -0.00 + 0.07*ZBFI + 0.50*ZBSS

Correlation Analysis of Independent Variables that Explains Business Vulnerability among Immigrant Business Owners in Durban, South Africa

To further examine the business vulnerability during COVID-19 among foreign business owners, the study using correlation analysis hypothesised the following:

There is a significant relationship between business vulnerability and business financial inclusion.

There is a significant relationship between business vulnerability and business safety and security.

Table 4: Test of Correlation between Business Vulnerability and Business Financial Inclusion and Business Security and Safety during COVID-19

Correlations								
Spearman's rho			BFI1	BFI2	BFI3	BSS1	BSS2	BSS3
	BVC1	Correlation Coefficient	.503**	-.120	.171	.132	.155	.329*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**	.390	.220	.346	.266	**.016**
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53
	BVC2	Correlation Coefficient	.121	-.060	.226	.183	.379**	.472**

			.390	.671	.104	.190	**.005**	**.000**
		Sig. (2-tailed)						
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53
	BVC3	Correlation Coefficient	.014	-.327*	-.198	.055	.230	.166
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.921	**.017**	.156	.698	.098	.234
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

NOTE:

Dependent Variable:

BVC1 - General perception of the Durban business environment

BVC2 - General narrative of your business xenophobic attack

BVC3 - How has the pandemic increased your vulnerability to poverty and livelihood shock

Independent Variables:

BFI1 – Perception of inclusive (access) is the business environment in SA

BFI2 - Access to business loans

BFI3 – Access to business relief by the government pre- and post-pandemic you enjoyed

BSS1 – Benefit of reliefs by the private sector/NGOs/Associations

BSS2 – Perception of safety of business environment during the pandemic

BSS3 – Perception of business experience of xenophobic attacks pre- and during the pandemic

The in-depth correlation analysis shows that business security and safety explained business vulnerability among immigrants more. Table 4 shows that the safety of the business environment and the xenophobic attack experience of business owners were the two indicators that explain their narrative of business xenophobic attacks as a vulnerability variable. However, there is an inverse relationship between immigrant vulnerability to poverty during the pandemic and access to loans. Increased access to business loans during the pandemic will likely decrease their vulnerability to poverty and livelihood shock. This is explainable, as the pandemic resulted in mobility and business restrictions in Durban, South Africa. Generally, the perception of the Durban business environment is explained by access to the city space for business engagement (R is 0.503; p-value is 0.000) and the perception of xenophobic attacks (R is 0.329; p-value is 0.016). This analysis (R= 0.503) explains that access to the city for business activity provides a mild explanation for business vulnerability (General perception of the Durban business environment) (Table 4).

Xenophobia and Insecurity: The Potent Viruses Behind Business Vulnerability

The role of foreign migrants and immigrant businesses in national development cannot be downplayed. Gelatt (2020) emphasised that immigrants are some of the worst affected populations by the COVID-19 pandemic. The precarity experienced by immigrants owing to the socioeconomic gap between them and the citizens of South Africa exposes these vulnerable groups to heightened livelihood and life satisfaction declines. This study shows a significant relationship between access to business loans and exposure to poverty as well as access to the marketplace and perceptions about the Durban business environment. However, the magnitude of the relationship between financial inclusion and immigrant business vulnerability in South Africa remains generally weak (Table 4). As presented in Table 3, there is evidence of the effects of business security and safety on the vulnerability of immigrant businesses in Durban, South Africa. The variables that define business security and safety are location safety and frequency of xenophobic activities.

Considering the dimensions of access to the marketplace during the pandemic, the data showed how restrictions due to the pandemic lockdown and xenophobic insecurities restricted access to spaces by immigrant business owners (see Bongaerts et al., 2021). Drawing from experiences in Australia, Zarghami (2021) found that the pandemic left businesses struggling and operational activities distorted. Ozili (2020) reported the social and economic negativities associated with the pandemic experience. The study reported that with an increase in the pandemic effect, state loans, philanthropic supply systems, and/or credit guarantees for companies were introduced in countries like South Africa. However, there was no information on immigrant access to such financial support systems. The findings revealed the resilience of immigrant businesses to the shocks of COVID-19. However, the pandemic activities and

experience in Durban were associated with social pandemic effects such as xenophobic events and immigrant business security and safety threats.

Gatticchi and Maseko (2020) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to fuel the instances of increased xenophobic activities in the country. It was argued that the institutional, systemic limitation would negatively affect about 100,000 businesses and over a hundred-billion rand revenue sources in the country. The spatial threat to foreign-owned businesses in the township was also reported. The argument by indigenous residents provoked the continued fight for 'restricted access to market space' (p-value = 0.0000, see Table 4) for foreign migrants. As evident in over 20 billion rands annual rental charges paid by foreign-owned businesses (Gatticchi and Maseko, 2020) in townships, the vulnerability of businesses continue to be heightened by xenophobic activities restricting access to business spaces.

Human Rights Watch (2021) wrote that South Africa as a nation remained continually plagued by migrant discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic era. Despite incessant attacks on foreign nationals and business looting, the police remained 'irresponsive' to xenophobic experiences. It was further documented that institutional discrimination of migrants was evident in the 'silence' in the pandemic support system and programme instituted by the government during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the stress and shock of the reactionary COVID-19 pandemic events cannot be downplayed (Popoola, 2020a; Popoola et al., 2020), this study, aligning with Egwu's (2021) documentary, argues that the exclusion of migrants in the pandemic support system is a dimension of xenophobia on its own. It was reported that many immigrant individuals and business owners had to depend on one another for social and economic support (due to pandemic business restrictions) and communal and collective protection during the xenophobic business attacks and looting during this period.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2020) contends that while the entrepreneurial capacity and ability of migrants are noticeable, the issue of market inclusion remains a limitation. This marketplace (as embedded in the urban corridors, city, or township) inclusion is from the spatial dimension concerning the ease of, accessibility to, and safety of doing business in a particular place (p-value = 0.005). The dimension of safety and security as a driver of business vulnerability in Durban is from the physical, social, and economic stress, shocks, and exclusion that are associated with both xenophobia (see p-value = 0.000 in Table 4) in the city and the threats to life in the migrant business environment. Owing to xenophobic activities in South Africa, the IOM (2019; 2020) reported that in the last ten years, over sixty deaths, thousands of shop looting and property destruction have been recorded. Misago and Mlilo (2021) reported that between 1994 and April 2021, there were 588 fatalities and about 4693 shops were looted from the reported 796 incidents of xenophobic violence. In the spatial location of the xenophobic violence, it was reported that Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal are the epicenters (see Figure 2).
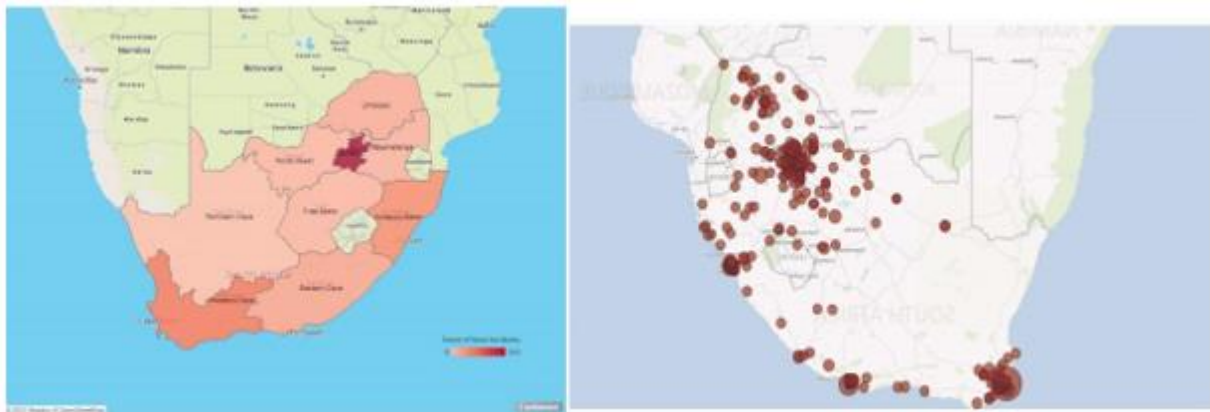

Figure 2: **Distribution of Xenophobic Violence in South Africa 1994 – 2021**

Source: Misago and Mlilo (2021)

Misago and Mlilo (2021) reported that KwaZulu-Natal, Durban city (with 84 out of the 105 xenophobic incidents in the province) and Durban inner city (migrant trader corridor) experienced about twenty-two xenophobic incidents over the reported year. The evidence points to a 3% chance that every xenophobic incident in the country will occur along the migrant business corridor and an 11% chance that it will take place in Durban city. When the reported incidence was examined at a city level, it was revealed that 25% of all xenophobic incidents in the city take place along these migrant-clustered trading corridors. When considered within the study period of 2020 to 2021 (COVID-19 pandemic era), the argument is that at least two xenophobic incidences occurred along the Durban inner-city corridor during the COVID-19 pandemic and about 14 xenophobic incidences (out of a national total of 65) in the city of Durban. The consequent effect include death, looting, injury, or property loss.

It was recorded that the deaths of 300 Bangladeshis between 2011 and 2015, with 47 Ethiopians killed in 2015 in KwaZulu-Natal (Mulaudzi et al., 2021) and about 50000 displaced (Gatticchi and Maseko, 2020) were due to tensions that affected foreigners and migrants. Expounding on the insecurity condition, crime data from Crime Hub in the Institute for Security Studies (2021) show that business robbery in Durban Central (including the study area) peaked over the previous two years (see Figure 3)

Figure 3: Robbery Business in Durban Central 2006 – 2020
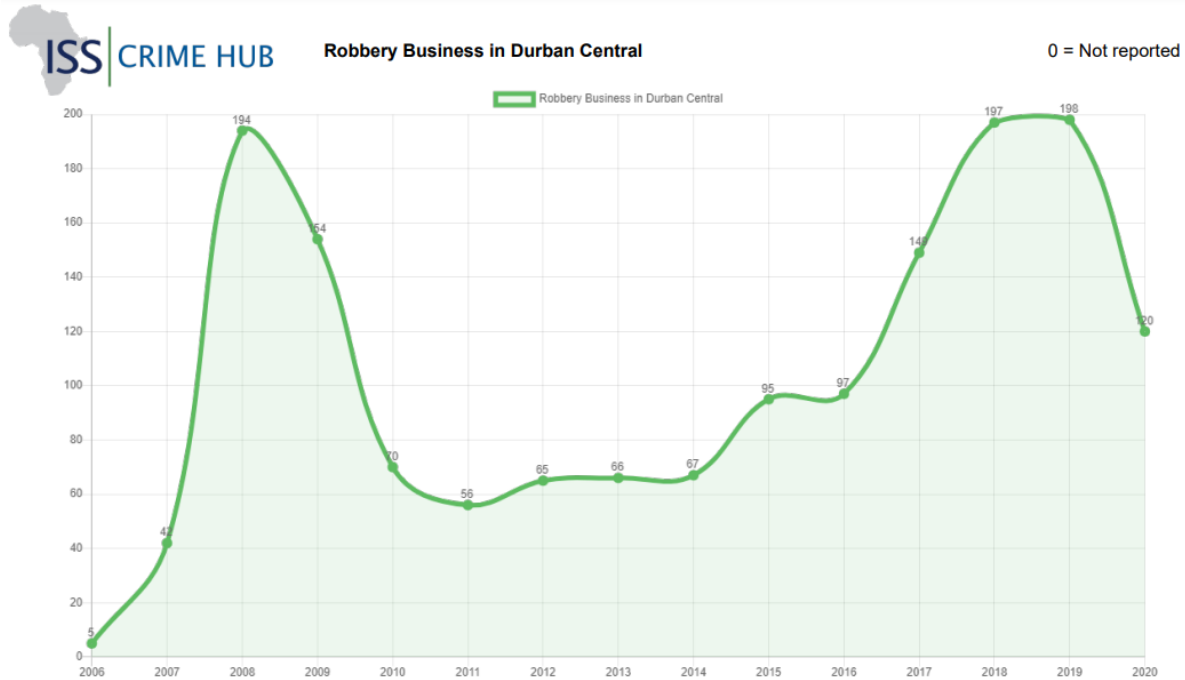
Source: Institute for Security Studies (2021)

According to Grant and Thompson (2015), the dilemma of foreign migrant spatial insecurity in the business environment iterates a dimension to the institution's exclusion and attack on foreign businesses. It was recognised that many immigrant traders reported police harassment within the business area. Human Rights Watch (17 September 2020) reported that an immigrant business owner (Syed from Bangladesh) in South Africa was left exposed to looting, shocking threats to his life and livelihood, owing to police exclusion and non-existent responsiveness to immigrant calls during xenophobic eruptions. It was reported that mobbing and looting of over 1000 Bangladeshi shops were done by an average of over 300 organised indigenous looters. Syed, an immigrant business owner recalled that an emergency and distress

call to the police was ignored. He said they did not show up until the third day, forcing him and other shop owners to stand guard over the shops without sleep day, and night, for three days, as the mob threw stones and other objects at them (Human Rights Watch, 17 September 2020).

Member associations reported that over 40,000 shops had been abandoned in the past 10 years due to fear of robberies and murders by criminals (Mulaudzi et al., 2021), with over 1,000 Bangladeshi shops deserted in 2017 alone. To provide a hypothetical value of loss to xenophobic incidence, Gatticchi and Maseko (2020) wrote that the over 100,000 immigrant businesses in South Africa generate about 100 billion rand ($6.8 billion) annually in revenue. Likewise, SME South Africa (28 November 2018) report shows that small businesses generate an average revenue of R200,000 annually. This study generalises that of the over 40,000 shops abandoned over the last ten years (Mulaudzi et al., 2021), an estimated revenue of about 8 billion rands has been lost. This represents about 0.3% of the income generated from small businesses. Citing the 2019 Annual Financial Statistics (AFS) survey, Statssa (2020) reported that small businesses and, most significantly, trading were responsible for generating R2.3 trillion (or 22%) of the 10.5 trillion (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Small Business Contribution

Where are small businesses making a contribution?
Percentage contribution to total turnover in the formal business sector by industry and enterprise size, 2013 and 2019

Legend: Small | Medium | Large

Industry	Year	Small	Medium	Large
All industries	2013	16%	9%	75%
	2019	22%	10%	68%
Business services	2013	29%	9%	62%
	2019	42%	8%	50%
Community and social	2013	30%	6%	64%
	2019	33%	8%	60%
Trade	2013	24%	10%	65%
	2019	28%	10%	61%
Construction	2013	17%	22%	61%
	2019	34%	24%	42%
Manufacturing	2013	9%	9%	81%
	2019	13%	11%	76%
Transport	2013	7%	4%	89%
	2019	13%	6%	81%
Forestry & fishing	2013	6%	4%	89%
	2019	12%	5%	83%
Mining	2013			97%
	2019			95%
Utilities	2013			98%
	2019			95%

Source: Annual Financial Statistics (AFS), 2019

stats sa
Department
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NDP

Source: Annual financial statistics (AFS), Statssa (2019)

This study recognises the spatial insecurity that continually limits migrant business owners' prospects in achieving spatial and economic articulation and city inclusivity. The study concluded that despite the urban economic rejuvenation and regeneration that migrants' businesses bring to urban business corridors, indigenous South Africans' perception of immigrant-driven exclusion (due to increasing city space occupation) remains a threat to migrants' business survival. The exclusion of foreigners from local spaces and the exclusion of locals from foreign enclaves play out differently across the fabric of the inner city. Grant and Thompson (2015:198) suggest that a nuanced approach to negotiating the relationship between the rights of citizens and the rights of immigrants to urban space must consider these differences in building inclusive spaces.

This study, like Nicholls and Vermeulen (2017), recognises the role of migration collective mobilisation by immigrants to citizenship, access, and city area use. The study argues

that citizenship rights in the city involves the foreign migrant business owners' unrestricted access and ownership of space in the city. These rights derive from the understanding that immigrants collective integration and business survival in cities cannot be continuously ignored because it constitutes a crucial part of the urban fabric. If access to rights to the city is not well managed, immigrants are subjected to increased economic inequality, segregation, livelihood, and economic marginalisation.

Conclusion

The study explored the possible changes in the narrative about immigrant business owners' exclusion during the COVID-19 pandemic. The argument is that since the COVID-19 pandemic was not exclusive to indigenous South Africans or migrants in Durban, the pandemic may be a 'great equaliser' that contributes to improved immigrant business growth, inclusion, and integration in the city. The study captures the needs and 'somewhat' changes the narratives about immigrants' experiences.

The investigated constructs established that security and safety-related indicators, more than financial inclusion indicators, account for vulnerability among foreign businesses in Durban during the pandemic. The evidence points out that the suggested 'covert relief discrimination' (Ayuk, 2022) during the pandemic had limited impact on the vulnerability of foreign businesses during the pandemic. This indicates that security-related indicators are the 'main pandemic' impacting immigrant businesses in the city. The study likewise revealed that the experience of xenophobic attacks among business owners and the safety of the business environment explained two critical components of business vulnerability. However, access to business loans as an

independent variable that explains financial inclusion had a higher magnitude relationship with business vulnerability in Durban, South Africa.

Immigrant business security and safety are essential to their continued resilience, livelihood improvements, and sustainability. Increased security investment would be crucial to moving away from business vulnerability among foreign migrants. Such security investment should be place-conscious (immigrant business locations/corridors). Conscious security investment will provoke the perception of effective security agency's collective and inclusive response against possible xenophobic attacks. This essential investment must include improved communication, emergency response, police post presence, office spaces, and better coordinated security apparatus for immigrant businesses. This study's reflections can contribute to the engineering of circumstances that produce peaceful cohabitation between foreign migrant business owners and indigenous dwellers in Durban, South Africa.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the study, as the evidence showed, is the possibility that the pandemic and the resultant xenophobic activity, which may be COVID-19 pandemic-driven are important variables whose effects may not be amenable to precise measurement. There is an emotionalist perspective of the non-pandemic shocks as limitations to immigrants' host country assimilation and integration. There is also a limitation due to the small study sample, caused by the lockdown and social distancing restrictions during this period. The study recognises that other unidentified factors relating to financial inclusion during the pandemic may not be represented in the analysis. The study may not have captured other economic variables but it is significant in contributing to the literature on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant businesses. However, the main concern is not to underplay the negative effects of the pandemic, but rather to further

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highlight that for immigrant businesses the most potent vulnerability stressors are insecurity and

xenophobic incidences, despite the business restrictions associated with the COVID-19

pandemic.

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Figure 1: **Hypothetical Prediction of Immigrant Business Vulnerability in Durban**
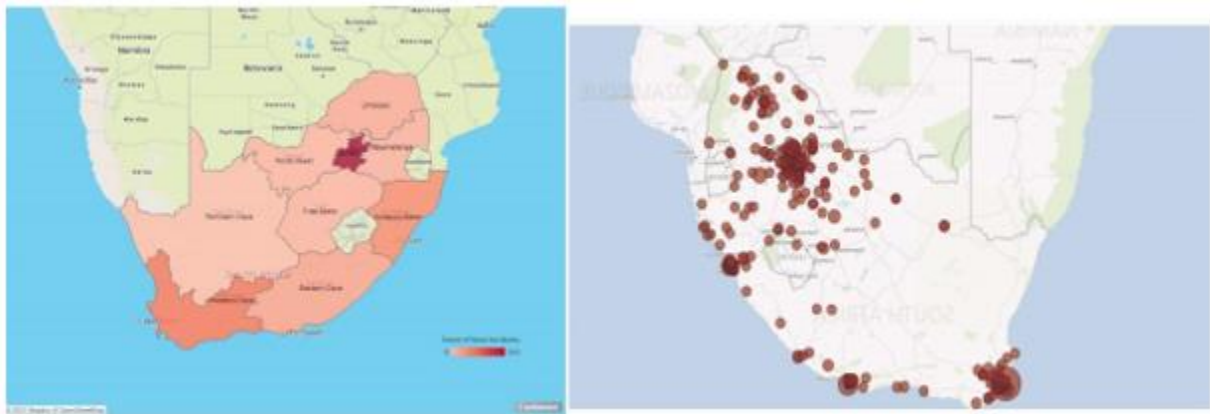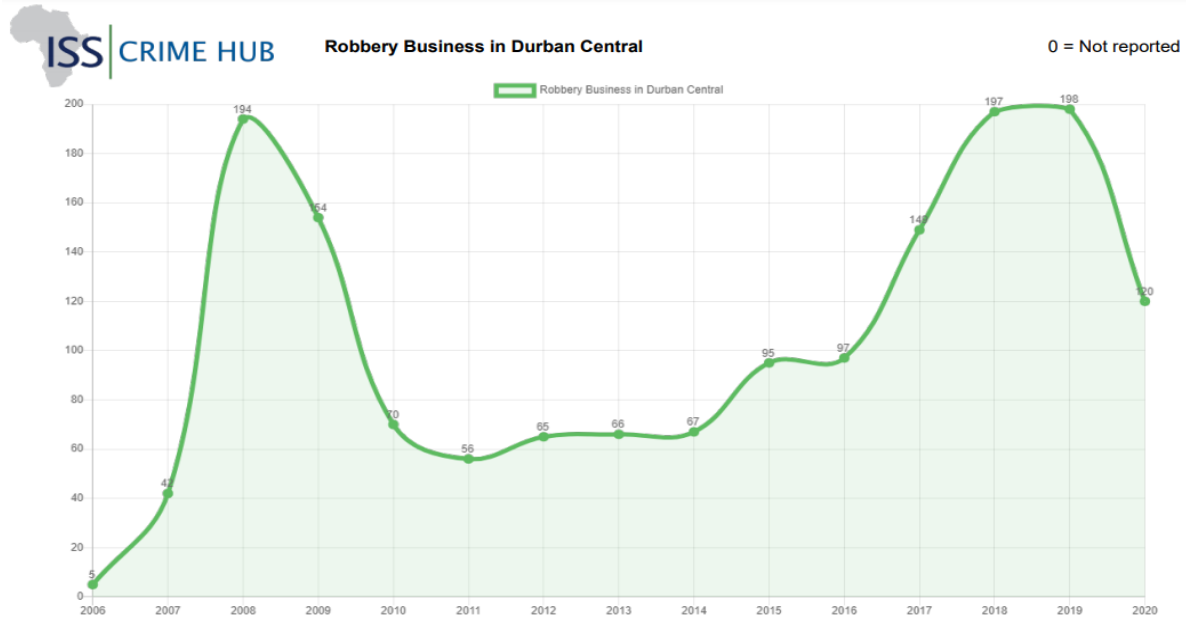
Source: Authors' Construct

Figure 2: **Distribution of Xenophobic Violence in South Africa 1994 – 2021**

Source: Misago and Mlilo (2021)

Figure 3: **Robbery Business in Durban Central 2006 – 2020**
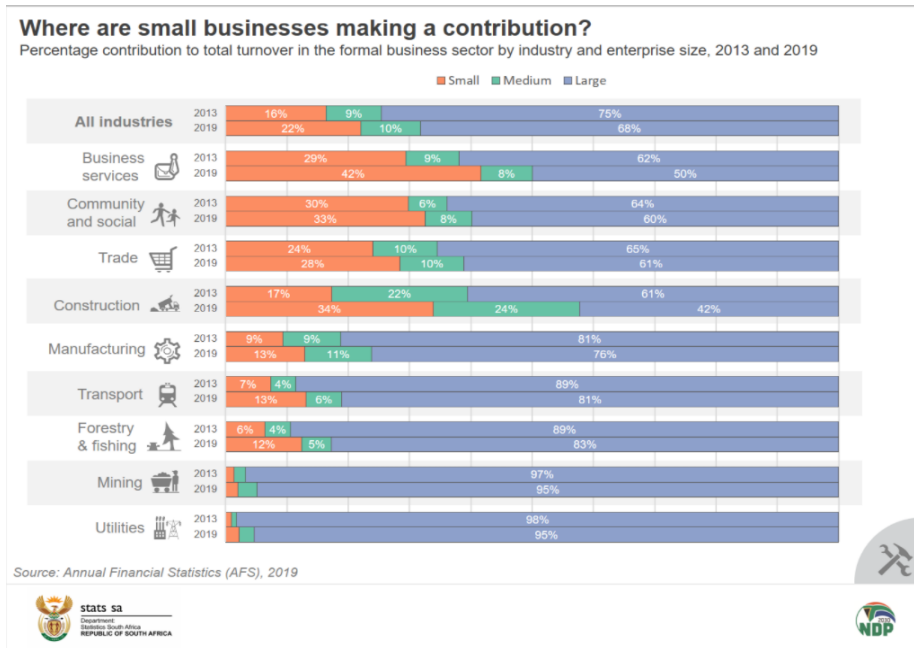
Source: Institute for Security Studies (2021)

Figure 4: **Small Business Contribution**

Source: Annual financial statistics (AFS), Statssa (2019)

Table 1: Country of Origin's Regions of Sample Immigrants

Country Classification	No.	%
Southern Africa	18	34.0
Eastern Africa	8	15.1
Western Africa	24	45.3
Non-African	3	5.7
Total	**53**	**100.0**

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Country of last Migration			Length of Stay in South Africa		
Variable	Frequency	Percent	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Southern Africa	27	50.9	**1 to 3 years**	12	22.6
Eastern Africa	8	15.1	**4 to 6 years**	11	20.8
Western Africa	15	28.3	**7 to 10 years**	11	20.8
Non-African	3	5.7	**Above 10 years**	19	35.8
Total	53	100.0	Total	53	100.0
Gender			**Marital Status**		
Male	38	71.7	**Single**	34	64.2
Female	15	28.3	**Married**	19	35.8
Total	53	100.0	Total	53	100.0

Table 3: Results for Linear Regression with Business Financial Inclusion and Business Security and Safety predicting Business Vulnerability during COVID-19

Variable	B	SE	95% CI	B	t	p
(Intercept)	-0.00	0.12	[-0.24, 0.24]	0.00	-0.00	1.000
ZBFI	0.07	0.12	[-0.18, 0.31]	0.07	0.55	.587
ZBSS	0.50	0.12	[0.25, 0.74]	0.50	4.07	< .001

Note. Results: $F(2,50) = 8.71$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.26$
Unstandardized Regression Equation: ZBVC = -0.00 + 0.07*ZBFI + 0.50*ZBSS

Table 4: Test of Correlation between Business Vulnerability during COVID-19 and Business Financial Inclusion and Business Security and Safety

Correlations								
Spearman's rho			BFI1	BFI2	BFI3	BSS1	BSS2	BSS3
	BVC1	Correlation Coefficient	.503[**]	-.120	.171	.132	.155	.329[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**	.390	.220	.346	.266	**.016**
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53
	BVC2	Correlation Coefficient	.121	-.060	.226	.183	.379[**]	.472[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.390	.671	.104	.190	**.005**	**.000**
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53
	BVC3	Correlation Coefficient	.014	-.327[*]	-.198	.055	.230	.166
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.921	**.017**	.156	.698	.098	.234
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).								
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								
NOTE: Dependent Variable:								

BVC1 - General perception of the Durban business environment

BVC2 - General narrative of your business xenophobic attack

BVC3 - How has the pandemic increased your vulnerability to poverty and livelihood shock

<u>Independent Variables:</u>

BFI1 – Perception of inclusive (access) is the business environment in SA

BFI2 - Access to business loans

BFI3 – Access to business relief by the government pre and post-pandemic you enjoyed

BSS1 – Benefit of reliefs by the private sector/NGOs/Associations

BSS2 – Perception of safety of business environment

BSS3 – Perception of business experience of xenophobic attacks

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Economic Forced Migration in Southern Africa: The Case of Malawi

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Abstract

As with other world regions, free market capitalism or the neoliberal system has caused numerous individuals and families to lose access to viable income-generating bases in Southern Africa. This places them in a socio-economically abject and precarious position. Resource-poor and unemployed Southern Africans have for a long time been forced to migrate to less unstable economies within the region. South Africa continues to be the most attractive destination for most poor and destitute Southern Africans. These people are called 'economic refugees' in the dominant literature. Hitherto, the plight of the Malawian 'economic refugee' in South Africa has not attracted much scholarly attention. Drawing on the interdisciplinary methodologies of African social philosophy and African social history, we present the case of Malawian economic refugees in South Africa. Drawing upon ideas derived from Immanuel Kant's analysis in Perpetual Peace (1917), this paper argues for the promotion of the *spirit of fraternity* between South Africans and Malawian migrants.

Keywords: Forced migration, economic refugee, fraternity, South Africa, Malawi, Immanuel Kant.

Brief Historical Background of Forced Migration

Migration is a global phenomenon. In Africa, it has attracted the scholarly attention of social philosophers, social historians, anthropologists, and development economists, among other thinkers. Scholars writing on migration in the Southern African region have advanced various reasons as to why people migrate from one country to another, especially migration to South Africa for wage employment (Chirwa 1992; Mudeka 2016; Groves 2020). Among the

many reasons advanced by scholars, the paper aims to pinpoint poverty and economic hardships as the chief reasons that have pushed and continue to push many Malawian nationals to migrate southwards, most often to South Africa. Many Malawians migrate to seek economic relief through securing jobs, originally in the mines, and recently, in all other occupations and businesses, primarily in South Africa.

International labor migration from Malawi to South Africa dates as far back as the 1880s (McCracken 2012). Banda rightly suggests that the history of international labor migration between Malawi and South Africa can be categorized into two periods: the old migration period, the 1880s–1980s and the contemporary migration period since the 1980s (Banda 2019). Malawian migrants started going to, largely, South African mines around the 1870s and 1880s following the establishment of diamond and gold mines (Banda 2017). This migration took two forms: formal migration to the mines and informal migration to work in other sectors of the economy. Formal migration, initially masterminded by the Witwatersrand Native Labor Association (WNLA, or *Wenela*) and later by the employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA), declined in the 1970s and finally collapsed in the 1980s (Banda 2017). Formal migrant labor from Malawi came to an end in the 1980s (Banda 2017, 2019).

In 1974, President Hastings Kamuzu Banda reportedly banned all labor recruiting activities in Malawi. The miners under the contract with WNLA were forcibly repatriated. Chirwa reports that about 130,000 Malawians were employed in South Africa at the time of the suspension, of whom some 119,000 were working in the mines belonging to the Chamber of Mines consortium. Some 12,000 were employed by other mines, as well as in manufacturing, farming, and some primary industries (Chirwa 1996). Labor migration prior to 1974, Chirwa observes, absorbed about 15 per cent of Malawi's economically active population, estimated at

about two million above the age of ten (Chirwa 1996). Following the ban, WNLA was replaced with The Employment Bureau of Africa Limited (TEBA), which was formed in 1977 as a merger of two companies, the Mine Labour Organisations (NRC) Limited, and the Mine Labour Organisations (Wenela) Limited (University of Johannesburg Library). TEBA officially collapsed in 1980 following disagreements between the Malawi government and TEBA officials on recruitment activities (Chirwa 1996). The reasons for TEBA's collapse, while significant, are outside the scope of this paper.

Central to our argument is the claim that poverty and economic hardships forced and continue to force many Malawian nationals to migrate to Southern African countries, most especially South Africa. In his article, Banda contends that the lack of employment opportunities in Malawi forced many people to migrate to other countries for jobs. However, it is noteworthy that not all districts exported migrant labor to South Africa. The districts that did, and still do, export most of the migrant labor to South Africa include Mzimba, Nkhata-Bay, Dedza, Ntcheu, Mangochi and Mulanje (Banda 2017, 2019).

Like many nationals of Southern African countries, Malawians migrated to South Africa for employment in the mines under a formal labor migration regime, until a ban on TEBA recruiting was effected in 1988. Following this ban, migration did not stop completely. Some workers resorted to 'self-initiated migration', popularly known as *selefu*, which is still happening. Chirwa argues that there is evidence that the adventurous ones still return to South Africa clandestinely as *selefu* (Chirwa 1997). The *selefu* fall into two categories: those who go to work, not in the mines, but in tertiary and service sectors, and those who capitalize on previous migratory experience and knowledge of local languages to engage in cross-border itinerant trade (Chirwa 1997).

The *selefu* phenomenon gives credence to our concept of 'economic refugee'. Although a lot has been documented about the migration of people from Malawi to other countries in the region, the plight of Malawian 'economic refugees', in South Africa primarily, has hitherto not received much scholarly attention, hence our focus on the subject. While acknowledging the legal dichotomy in migration studies between people who are recognized as 'refugees' as defined by the United Nations Refugee Convention and other treaties as 'people fleeing from their home in the face of threats of violence, leaving all their possessions behind', Maharaj (2002) defines an 'economic refugee' as a person who leaves his or her home country in search of better economic prospects and higher living standards elsewhere. He or she sees no or little opportunity to escape from poverty and destitution while in his or her own country. Although the term 'economic refugee' is contested in migration literature, the paper adopts Maharaj's definition to refer to those Malawian migrants who leave the country (Malawi) in search of economic prospects and higher living standards elsewhere, especially in South Africa.

In social philosophy, the migration of Malawians to South Africa does not come as a surprise nor is it an object of wonder. The eighteenth-century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant argues in his *Perpetual Peace* (1795) for what he calls the 'cosmopolitan right, which is the right of an individual to migrate and reside anywhere s/he chooses on planet earth. Kant argues that a foreigner ought not to be treated with hostility and inhospitality in the country of sojourn. For an immigrant's new-found life to be safe and secure physically and relatively comfortable economically in a destination country, there is need for the destination country and its nationals to have the spirit of *fraternity* (brotherliness or sisterliness), in contrast to the spirit of hostility (aggressiveness or inimicalness) and inhospitality, towards the immigrant.

This paper explores and examines the plight of Malawian 'economic refugees' in South Africa in connection with free-market capitalism, adopted by Malawi since it gained independence from its colonizer, Great Britain, in 1964. The paper demonstrates that free market capitalism is a catalyst to contemporary labor migrancy. Some Malawians who faced untold poverty leading to extremely low standards of living due to 'free market-ism' have been forced to migrate to neighboring countries, such as South Africa, which have relatively stable economies.

There is abject poverty and chronic hunger in Malawi. In 2019/20 for instance, the percentage of the poor was at 50.8, while 20.5 per cent of the population lived in extreme poverty (GoM 2020). To add insult to injury, there is also high unemployment and idleness, especially among Malawian young school leavers and the youth in general. The World Bank reported a youth unemployment rate of 8.09 per cent, 7.75 per cent and 7.73 per cent in 2020, 2021 and 2022 respectively (World Bank 2022). Poverty and unemployment are the push factors causing the migration of these poor Malawians to South Africa, the most preferred destination for most Malawian economic refugees. Southern African Development Community (SADC) treaties on migration governance and regional integration that should, as it were, wake up the South African government from its dogmatic slumber and complacency have not been binding so far.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative methodology. Empirical and secondary data were aggregated from semi-structured interviews with key informants and literature on the topic. The primary data was collected between 2019 and 2022 in Mangochi District of Malawi. Thirty key

informants were interviewed from the local population, biased towards former migrants, their wives and close relations. Key informants were purposefully sampled due to their first-hand experiences, availability and accessibility. The names used in this paper are not real names but pseudonyms in order to protect the key informants from any possible harm that might result from the use of their real names and indeed, in compliance with ethical rules of research of not exposing informants to possible harm. The recordings were transcribed and coded into themes that guided the writing of this paper. Secondary sources were also utilized. The literature from the secondary sources was instrumental in locating this present study in current debates on migration governance and regional integration within Africa. News media reports were also used to engage and incorporate the current experiences of migrants in South Africa.

Kantian Spirit of Fraternity and Regional Integration

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) argues that it 'places great importance on migration governance and has over the years made strides by designing and implementing tailored protocols, policies and programs that were meant to harmonize processes and interventions in migration governance' (SADC 2020:2) within the subregion. One of SADC's important protocols is the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons (2005). The importance of SADC's protocols on migration can be philosophically defended on Kantian grounds. Kant argues for the extension of 'the rights of man' beyond the nation, a right that he christens the 'cosmopolitan right' (Brown 2006). Kant bases the cosmopolitan right on certain observations about the empirical conditions of human existence, particularly the sphericality of the earth. For Kant, the earth belongs to all of us—and so any one person can migrate and relocate anywhere in the world. In his *Perpetual Peace*, Kant (1795) argues thus:

Here, [Universal Hospitality for World Citizenship] is not a question of philanthropy but of right. Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another. One may refuse to receive him when this can be done without causing his destruction; but, so long as he peacefully occupies his place, one may not treat him with hostility. It is not the right to be a permanent visitor that one may demand. A special beneficent agreement would be needed in order to give an outsider a right to become a fellow inhabitant for a certain length of time. It is only a right of temporary sojourn, a right to associate, which all men have. They have it by virtue of their common possession of the surface of the earth, where, as a globe, they cannot infinitely disperse and hence must finally tolerate the presence of each other. Originally, no one had more right than another to a particular part of the earth. (Kant 1795:137)

By implication, the Southern African subregion belongs to all Africans. For Kant, the cosmopolitan right is coterminous with laws of hospitality, defined broadly as 'the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone's territory' (Brown 2006). Kant is reported to have come up with the ideas of cosmopolitan rights and laws of hospitality in order to counteract the growing 'nationalism' in Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789. For him, this narcissistic nationalism led to lawlessness in international relations, and more crucially, to the exclusion and stigmatization of foreigners within states, leading to xenophobia in nation-states.

Kant argued strongly that individuals have 'a right of citizens of the world to try to establish community with all, and to this end, to visit all regions of the earth' (Brown 2006). The phrase 'community with all' can be rendered as 'fraternity' or brotherhood and sisterhood. Fraternity is etymologically derived from the Latin noun '*fraternitas*', meaning state or condition of being brethren. Thus, in the Kantian spirit of fraternity, it can be contended that all the peoples of the SADC subregion belong to one community as brothers and sisters. Invoking the cosmopolitan principle of fraternity, South Africans should look at foreign nationals entering their country as their brothers and sisters. Kant further argues that all humans can claim a right to travel and reside, arguing that '[Humans] may only claim a right to resort, for all men [and women] are entitled to present themselves in the society of others by virtue of their right to communal possession of the earth's surface' (Kant 1795:138).

Africa herself is not foreign to the idea of hospitality toward visitors. Traditionally, Africans are renowned for their spirit of hospitality towards strangers coming into their communities and households. For Julius Gathogo (2008), African hospitality is "the extension of generosity, giving freely without strings attached, [that is], an unconditional readiness to share" (Gathogo 2008:3). The inhospitality in South Africa is a clear manifestation of hostilities towards newly-arriving migrants in the hearts of citizens and residents of South Africa. These hostilities are un-African in so far as they undermine the spirit of fraternity, thwarting regional integration efforts in Southern Africa. African social philosophy's *Ubuntu* [humanness], as derived from the Nguni maxim *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* [a person is a person through other persons], suggests strongly that South Africa as a nation-state is in urgent need of moral reconstruction. For Gathogo, post-apartheid South Africa's moral reconstruction

is a process that will entail "being willing to reason out together as human beings who value other persons" (Gathogo 2008:10).

Gideon Muchiri Kaungu is deeply concerned with Afro-phobia in South Africa. He argues:

[T]hat xenophobic attacks towards black foreigners remains a human rights challenge in South Africa… Prevalent xenophobic attitudes continue to trouble the conscience of all well-meaning South Africans… There is ample evidence that xenophobia has morphed into afro-phobia, the hatred of black foreigners (Kaungu 2021:153).

As an antidote to xenophobia, Kaungu proposes "Ubuntu, or African 'humanness' whose 'natural home' should be located in South Africa, as a pragmatic social intervention and a morally sustainable solution to address xenophobia that would be acceptable to both South Africans and foreign nationals" (Kaungu 2021: 153).

The foregoing discussion has underscored the urgent need for robust regional migration governance policies as an integral part of regional integration efforts in Southern Africa. There is ample scholarly evidence that migration can benefit development (Williams 2006, Castles and Wise 2008). It is argued that migration within a region ought to be (intentionally) managed and not left to chance for such benefits to accrue to the affected countries (Williams 2011). Southern Africa stands to benefit from the free movement of its peoples intra-regionally. For this migration–induced development to materialize, there is need for regional cooperation among the SADC member states (Williams 2006).

At the continental level, the African Union (AU) put in place the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (hereinafter MPFA), which was adopted in 2006 in Banjul, The Gambia. In November 2016, AU member states and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) acknowledged that migration trends and patterns on the continent had changed over the past ten years (that is, since the adoption of the MPFA). The MPFA was then revised to include a plan of action (hereinafter PoA) and was thus renamed the Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (MPFA and PoA) (2018–2030). AU member states and RECs observed that migration was inevitable across the continent, hence their resolution that migration be managed to reflect the prevailing migration dynamics in Africa (African Union Commission 2018).

The MPFA and PoA provide AU member states and RECs comprehensive policy guidelines and principles to assist them in the formulation and implementation of their own national and regional migration policies in accordance with their priorities and available resources. The MPFA and PoA are premised on the justified true belief that African states have a long tradition of hospitality towards foreigners, refugees and asylum seekers (African Union Commission 2018). Among its eight key pillars, the MPFA and PoA's first key pillar is to see to it that the continent has better migration governance. This is the overarching objective. It is aimed at facilitating safe, orderly, and dignified migration. In an attempt to implement migration governance policy in Africa, and in direct relation to the key pillar of migration and trade, there is the Continental Free Trade Area and the AU Free Movement of Persons Protocol, which is aimed at stimulating cross-border trade and propelling continental integration and development in Africa (African Union Commission 2018). Realizing that policy must be based on knowledge and information, the AU recently established a migration research initiative, namely, the African Centre for Studies and Research on Migration (hereinafter CAREM) with a

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secretariat in Bamako, Mali. CAREM is the continental research hub on policy issues of regional integration, migration and human mobility in Africa.

At the regional level, in 2005, the SADC established the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons, which 'places great importance on migration governance' within the regional bloc (SADC 2021). This particular SADC protocol was developed in order to facilitate entry, "with lawful purpose, without visa into another member state for a maximum of 90 days, permanent and temporary residence in the territory of another state and establishing oneself and working in the territory of another member state (SADC 2022). However, to date, the protocol is yet to be in force in the regional bloc.

From the immediately foregoing, it is evident that although the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) notwithstanding, a regime for migration governance is yet to materialize both at the African continental and regional SADC levels. Although policy moves have been initiated at both levels, there is no binding migration governance policy either at the AU or SADC level to date. The initiated policy moves are illumined by research and studies on migration governance. Yet these two geopolitical bodies are moving at a snail's pace as far as migration governance policy is concerned. The policy moves were initiated close to two decades ago. There is very little cooperation among the leaders of African countries. The slow pace vis-à-vis policy implementation is symptomatic of the severe lack of political will and commitment on the part of the leadership of member states both at AU and SADC levels.

It bears emphasizing that the initiated policy moves are premised on the idea that African communities are well-known for offering hospitality to foreigners, refugees and asylum seekers. Thus, if these draft policies were formulated, ratified by all member states, rendered

binding, and then reflected in continental, regional and national migration governance policies, most of them would have been implemented by now. Migration governance policy implementation would have ended, or greatly minimized inhospitality, hostilities and xenophobic attacks on migrants in destination countries like South Africa. Fraternity would have reigned supremely in the region and the continent. Ultimately, migration governance policy implementation would have spurred the much-anticipated regional and continental integration processes.

Free-market Capitalism or the Neo-Liberal System in Malawi

Due to a multiplicity of factors, ranging from historical-political to socio-economic, Malawi has had a very turbulent and unprofitable relationship (for the majority of citizens) with free-market capitalism. At independence in 1964, the first republican state president, Hastings Kamuzu Banda inherited a dualistic agricultural economy from Great Britain, its colonizer (1891–1964) (Kaunda 1995). Banda did not radically transform the economy, even if he managed to keep it stable during his three decades of dictatorship. Banda put a heavy emphasis on agriculture, himself a proud, wealthy owner of several tobacco estates in Central Malawi. Banda and his compatriots in the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) employed many young people in their tobacco estates (Carmack et al. 2010). His regime's paramilitary wing, the now-defunct Malawi Young Pioneers, (MYP), also engaged many young people in its vocational training programs in the MYP bases dotted across the country (Nkhoma 2011, Wood 1970). Banda's successor, Eleson Bakili Muluzi (1994–2004), himself a prominent businessman, in line with neoliberal economic thinking, emphasized entrepreneurship, shifting the focus away from agriculture, but he omitted to put in place requisite policies and programs to drive his entrepreneurial agenda at the nation-level.

The Malawi army disbanded MYP in 1993 on the eve of Muluzi's election victory (Chirambo 2004). Since the starting point of Muluzi's presidency coincided with the time of the liberation of South Africa from apartheid and with the beginning of South Africa's ongoing democratization, a significant segment of Malawian youth began to migrate in significant numbers to South Africa during his administration. Nevertheless, it remains unclear if Malawian youth would have benefited from Muluzi's entrepreneurial agenda had he had policies and programs for it, embroiled as his regime was in rampant corruption.

Due to adverse climate change effects leading to prolonged drought and erratic rains as well as very destructive flash floods, rainstorms and tropical cyclones across the country in recent years, Malawi's food production systems have experienced severe stress, leading to widespread hunger every year and to famine in some years (Nyirenda et al. 2022). Climate change effects have greatly worsened food insecurity in Malawi, thereby deepening both rural and urban poverty. Muluzi's regime added pressure to the forces that drove the youth to migrate to South Africa (Menon 2008). All post-Muluzi regimes - Bingu wa Mutharika: 2004–2012, Joyce Banda: 2012–2014, Peter Mutharika: 2014–2020, and now Lazarus Chakwera: 2020–), upon assuming the highest seat of power, have found themselves facing the same ominous challenge of food insecurity. Inevitably, all of them have had to hazard subsidizing peasants' and small-scale farmers' inputs annually, to the surprise of the International (multilateral) Financing Institutions, (IFIs) the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Dorward 2008).

The Malawi Government Affordable Input (Subsidy) Program (AIP) began in Muluzi's time. Then it was called the Starter Pack Program. It catered to the needs of a handful of ultra-poor peasant farmers, giving each a bag of chemical fertilizer and some maize and groundnut

seeds (Chinsinga and O'Brien 2007). Bingu wa Mutharika boldly expanded his AIP to the extent that he provoked the wrath and rebuke of the two IFIs (Dorward 2008). Locally though, he earned mass approval and popularity with the electorate, leading to his own and his party's 'landslide victory' in the 2009 general elections. Joyce Banda, Peter Mutharika, and now Lazarus Chakwera have all capitalized on the visible political-electoral gains of the AIP by clinging to it, despite the two IFIs' continued vocal concerns about the AIP. All three state presidents have kept the number of farmer-beneficiaries of the AIP more or less constant. Admittedly, these social development programs and subsidies are democratic in nature.

Despite the popularity of the subsidy programs, the political elites' strategizing for elections using state-driven farm inputs has had a negative impact on the youth. Right from Muluzi's time to the present, the youth have been consistently and systematically neglected in terms of policies and programs for employment and economic empowerment. By contrast, autocrat Kamuzu Banda had for the youth, the tobacco estates and other activities of MYP to engage them productively (Nkhoma 2011).

Hitherto, none of Kamuzu Banda's successors have offered anything tangible to the despondent youth. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, tropical cyclones Ana and Gombe (climate change-engineered natural disasters), and the Russo-Ukrainian "war" have plunged the already stressed economy into a graver economic recession, leading to the skyrocketing of prices of food (maize, rice and wheat), fuel, fertilizer, and other basic necessities on Malawi's free market (Weerdt and Duchoslav 2022). Malawian youth are some of the worst-hit casualties of these three most recent exogenous shocks to the local economy.

Although there has been a shift in emphasis from farm-based production to non-farm service industries in the post-Kamuzu Banda dispensation, prompted by a dwindling tobacco farming system (due to the ever-rising cost of inputs and the anti-tobacco global campaign), this paradigm shift has aggravated the condition of the most vulnerable members of Malawian society: the youth. The challenges in this chronically ill economy have led to the flight of the youth from rural to urban areas of the country for a better life, leading to increasing youth unemployment in the latter areas. For the youth who have been unable to find employment in the urban areas after fleeing rural poverty, the only available option has been, and still is to migrate southwards, with South Africa being their most preferred destination (Ndegwa 2015).

Growing youth unemployment in Malawi has been, and still is, the major trigger factor for Malawi youth emigrating to South Africa (Ndegwa 2015). Youth emigration from Malawi to South Africa intensified from 1994 with the advent of democratic change in both post-repressive nation-states. German-based *Statista* survey data on youth unemployment rates in many African countries, including SADC member states, shows that while as of 2019, South Africa had the highest youth unemployment rate in the SADC bloc, estimated at 57.47 per cent, Malawi's youth unemployment rate was estimated at 7.4 per cent during the same period (GoM 2022). Statistically, this means South Africa's youth unemployment rate was eight times that of Malawi at that material time. In terms of the question of who carries the immigration burden, this implies that a country with rather low levels of youth unemployment has been and still is 'exporting' its unemployed youth labor to a country that is in itself apparently unable to employ more than half of its youthful population. This incongruity has not escaped the notice of anti-foreigner vigilante groupings in South Africa's urban areas. These xenophobic activists intimate that foreigners like Malawian youth are stealing jobs from South Africans—jobs that

they claim are too hard to find for the majority of local unemployed youth. These Afrophobic activists argue, without necessarily including the fact that South Africa has a huge and unsustainable immigration burden. The country cannot manage to shoulder this burden, because it has its own numerous unemployed young people to attend to, as regards job creation and economic empowerment.

Primary Research: Malawians as 'Undocumented Migrants' in Southern African Host Countries — South Africa in Focus

The end of formal recruiting of labor by WNLA and later TEBA in Malawi did not end the emigration of Malawian nationals to South Africa completely. Scholarly evidence indicates that formal migrant labor recruitment occurred side by side with informal or 'clandestine' migration. *Selefu* picked up when formal migrant labor recruitment came to an end (Banda 2017). Compared to formal or contract labor migration, much of the statistical information on the numbers of *selefu* migrants is based on mere estimates (Banda 2019). As a consequence, it is difficult to state with certainty and precision, the number of migrants who emigrated from Malawi to South Africa during the last part of the nineteenth century, the entire twentieth century, and the first part of the twenty-first century (Banda 2019). In his article, Maharaj differentiated the categories of 'undocumented migrants'. The first category is those who enter South Africa without valid documents; the second category, those migrants who enter the country legally but stay on after the expiry of their visas, and the third category refers to refugees and asylum seekers who generally have valid documents or are awaiting the

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processing of their documents and hence have a legal right to be in South Africa (Maharaj 2002). The focus of this paper is on the first two categories of 'undocumented migrants. Of significance are the various prevailing circumstances leading a Malawian migrant to end up being undocumented in South Africa today. Further, this mixed migration phenomenon is hardly unique to the Malawi-South Africa situation. It is a worldwide phenomenon (Ghosh Bimal, 2018). Credible evidence shows that many Malawian youth have been and are still migrating to South Africa without valid documents. For instance, informants in the present study maintained that most men and women of M'baluku area of Mangochi district in the Southern region of Malawi migrate to South Africa mainly because of poverty. The hardship and deprivation experienced means that they cannot afford to apply for passports due to high costs of the same. One of our informants, Ndemeka Bakili, shared his experience thus:

> I went to South Africa last year [2021] because of poverty… With an aim of getting employment, I decided to leave Malawi for South Africa where I could explore better work opportunities. While in South Africa, I faced several challenges during my stay, because I didn't have a passport. Neither did I have money to process a passport, for it is very expensive to process (Ndemeka, personal communication, 18 April 2022).

Similarly, other informants have also cited poverty as the main propelling factor for the migration of men and women from Malawi to South Africa without passports and other residence permits. Esitele Maloko explains what forced her husband to go to South Africa without valid documents in 2019:

It was our lack of money that forced my husband to go to South Africa without a

chiphaso [passport] in 2019. We had problems with raising transport money for

him. But we thank Allah he eventually made it to South Africa even though he

returned earlier than he had planned because of adverse conditions there. (Maloko,

personal communication, 11 April 2021)

The 'adverse conditions' from the interview cited above are a manifestation of the

contrary spirit to fraternity, i.e., the spirit of hostility and inhospitality, which Kant, the

'cosmopolitanist' philosopher, condemned long ago.

Unemployed and poverty-stricken, Estele Maloko's husband emigrated to South Africa in

2019 without *chiphaso* and a residence permit that would have been necessary for him to

legally stay in South Africa. In a poverty-stricken family, it was too hard for them to raise

enough funds to apply for *chiphaso*. Also, her husband's sojourn to South Africa was cut short

due to the dearth of the Kantian spirit of fraternity in that host country.

Similar to the two tales of poverty as the push factor, Stella Lifa narrated her husband's

migration to South Africa without a passport. She recalled thus:

My husband decided to go to South Africa with the hope to find a better paying job,

from which he had planned to support us back here. His stay in South Africa was

illegal because he had no *chiphaso*. He could not have afforded to apply for one, it

was expensive at the time [June 2017]. I do not know how much it is now, but back

then it was so expensive. (Lifa, personal communication, 18 April 2021)

Upon the expiry of their 30-day temporary visas, Rafiki M'bwana and Imran Muhammad,

in their separate accounts indicated that they both accrued more than 30 days in South Africa,

and hence they were penalized with a bar to re-entry of five years. However, this did not stop them from clandestinely returning to South Africa, to do business and piece work respectively. Using uncharted routes, the two explained that porous borders in Malawi enabled them to steal their way back into South Africa and pay the transporter more money for bribing immigration officers on the way. M'bwana narrates:

> It was hard when my temporary visa expired because then my stay in South Africa became illegal. I could not walk about freely as I used to, because police always demand immigrants to produce their visas for them to see if they have not expired. I kept hiding and working, because at work all they wanted was the passport; to them the expiry of my visa was not an issue. One day the police apprehended me on my way to work. They told me I had accrued more days after my temporary visa had expired. They took me to a police station and I was penalized with a bar for re-entry of five years. (M'bwana, personal communication, 11 April 2021)

Barring re-entry for an immigrant for five years due to an expired visa instead of just assisting them to renew or extend the visa is a manifestation of hostility and inhospitality, which is a contrary spirit to fraternity on the part of the South African immigration law enforcers. According to Kant, such an act of hostility and inhospitality towards migrants is a form of both anti-fraternity and anti-cosmopolitanism.

In spite of the growing hostilities towards migrants of African descent — i.e., Afrophobia — especially in urban South Africa today as exemplified by the emergence of anti-foreigner vigilante extremist organizations in the wider Johannesburg area, the rainbow nation remains the most preferred destination for poverty-stricken Malawians aspiring to emigrate southwards.

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Recent studies testify to these emigration aspirations, especially among Malawian youth (Edhur and Isbell 2019). These findings resonate well with the tempo of our study. For instance, the March 2019 Afrobarometer Survey on Malawi indicates that due to the high unemployment rate, somewhat exponential population growth, and increasingly dwindling living standards leading to high costs of living in the country, a good number of Malawians, mostly the youth, have recently considered emigration. The most preferred destination for these potential emigrants is unequivocally South Africa. The said findings indicate further that almost half of the respondents considered emigration. Two-thirds (65 per cent) of potential emigrants said they would probably move to South Africa, and a majority of these are people who have not attained post-secondary school education (Bhoojedhur & Isbell 2019). The most likely cited reasons for wanting to emigrate, the survey indicates, are to escape poverty and economic hardships. About 51 per cent have indicated this as a reason for emigration, 40 per cent have cited job search as their chief reason and only three per cent indicated a search for better entrepreneurial opportunities (Bhoojedhur & Isbell 2019). Latest statistics show that over one million Malawians are living in South Africa while over 700, 000 are in Tanzania. Of this population, 90 per cent are reported to be youth (that is, people below the age of 35) (Malawi24 2021).

In the next section, we discuss the implications of Malawians' emigration to South Africa, focusing on the opportunities, benefits, risks and challenges.

The Implications of Being an 'Undocumented Migrant': Opportunities, Benefits, Risks, and Challenges

Malawian and foreign migrants in South Africa tend to send remittances home. There are testimonies on this issue from the interviews conducted. In 2017, in Mangochi District, Malita Lifa, wife of Matiki who went to *Joni* [Johannesburg] said, 'People make money in *Joni*. For instance, my husband built a house, bought two radios and a huge plasma TV screen'. Malita's husband has been operating a barber shop in Johannesburg since 2018 (Lifa, personal communication, 11 April 2021). Whilst in *Joni*, Malita's husband has been sending money back home and sometimes he comes home for a brief stay, carrying goods bought using the money he earns from his business. Similarly, in the same district, Zainab Muhammad narrates how her husband who went to South Africa in January 2021 managed to buy land on which they are now planning to build their grocery shop. For her, the land is enough to build a grocery shop and a *khola la mbuzi* [goat kraal] (Muhammad, personal communication, 11 April 2021). At the time of writing, a good number of families in M'baluku where the fieldwork was conducted had at least one gadget bought from Johannesburg. Out of every ten households interviewed, nine had either a gadget or other commodities from *Joni*. Some families acknowledged paying school fees for their children using money sent through *Mukuru*, *Hello Paisa*, and other channels of international money transfer from *Joni*.

These testimonies underline how Malawian migrants in South Africa contribute substantially to their household needs even during their brief stay or overstay in South Africa. The remittances, either in form of money and/or goods, help to alleviate poverty in their homes back in Malawi. Remittances from informal employment in South Africa are used in various ways such as to buy farm inputs (seed and fertilizer) to start small-scale businesses, and to invest in various construction projects (Banda 2019). Locally, these investments are overseen often by the 'spouses' or close relatives of the immigrants. As Lunia M'bwana, wife to a

Malawian migrant in South Africa, explains, 'Most men just send money and agree with their wives on what should be done with the money'. Lunia argues that it is mostly women who execute the investment plans. For instance, in her case, she started building their house while her husband was still in South Africa. She also started a fish business using money sent from South Africa by her husband (M'bwana, personal communication, 18 April 2021).

Entrepreneurially, remittances enable migrants and their families to invest in agriculture and other enterprises. Upon return home, migrants are able to survive through businesses as their steady sources of income. Further, studies show that other migrants finance the education of their children using remittances. Other than building houses, remittances are used in numerous ways to improve the lives of migrants and their families back home. However, there is a plethora of evidence proving that Malawian and other Southern African 'undocumented migrants' face a myriad of risks and challenges in South Africa. The hostility and inhospitality in South Africa — and hence its anti-fraternity and anti-cosmopolitanism — towards African migrants like Malawians is palpable in numerous studies. For example, Banda says:

> [T]hese problems have to do with the process of looking for jobs and the type of jobs; accommodation; hatred and xenophobic attitudes from South Africans; arrests and deportations due to lack of valid documentation; and high crime rate, especially in the high-density residential areas like Alexandra, Diepsloot and Honeydew (Banda 2019: 161).

Banda is testifying to the existence of a spirit contrary to fraternity, that is, there is hostility and inhospitality towards Malawian undocumented migrants. A high degree of uncertainty during job search, extremely low-paying job offers, arbitrary arrests, police

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beatings, extortion, detentions and deportations are part of the litany of woes and calamities that befall Malawian undocumented migrants, especially in metropolitan South Africa. These woes and calamities produce a high degree of insecurity and vulnerability among Malawian undocumented migrants. The dismal situation is compounded by the high crime rate in high-density townships.

In general, undocumented migrants in South Africa are scapegoated for the country's high youth unemployment rate and other domestic problems. South African nationals blame foreigners for stealing their limited resources by taking up jobs, for the increasing crime rate, housing shortages and dwindling general welfare. As a result of these baseless accusations, migrants have been, and continue to be subjected to hostilities and harsh conditions in South Africa. The government of South Africa has turned a blind eye to the plight of migrants of African origin. South African police are also notorious for their hostility towards, and harassment of undocumented African migrants, Malawians included. Undocumented migrants in South Africa have continually faced hostilities including xenophobia since 1994 (Banda 2019). During periods of open hostilities and xenophobic attacks, undocumented migrants are either severely injured or beaten to death while the government does nothing. Migrants' shops and other business outlets are destroyed, as has been done by the anti-foreigner vigilante activist group, Alexandra Dudula, in Alexandra Township. Alexandra Dudula destroyed foreigners' shops and confiscated their goods.

Major waves of xenophobic attacks against foreigners occurred in May and June 2008 and April 2015. Beyond the aforementioned xenophobic attacks, several other xenophobic attacks against migrant entrepreneurs were reported from 2005 to 2014 (Crush & Ramachandran 2014).

The incidents of violence against foreigners are an indication of the gravity of the anti-fraternity spirit in the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Malawian undocumented migrants and other foreigners of African descent face untold suffering and misery as a result of these xenophobic attacks. However, this is not only perpetrated by ordinary South Africans. Government institutions such as the South African Department of Home Affairs, and government personnel including police, and others involved in immigration enforcement matters have abused, and at times violently assaulted, undocumented immigrants. There is a xenophobic environment which fosters the perpetuation of human rights violations and deprives immigrants of constitutional protections guaranteed by the Bill of Rights in the 1996 Constitution (Hicks 1999). The sword is double-edged as both locals and government officials push these undocumented migrants into detrimental situations. In general, South African nationals and government officials, most especially the police, display anti-fraternity and anti-cosmopolitan attitudes towards the African brothers and sisters in their midst. Hence, they collectively undermine the Kantian spirit of fraternity that would have facilitated genuine social integration at the regional level in Southern Africa.

In terms of employment, undocumented migrants with little or no education struggle to secure jobs, as it is difficult for them to communicate because they are not fluent in English. For Banda, 'It is more difficult for migrants who just arrive in South Africa to get jobs since they can hardly communicate in various local languages such as *isiZulu*. It is made worse if they are not fluent in English' (Banda 2019). This holds especially true for the Malawian undocumented migrants in the post-1994 period. For Banda, primary school leavers in the post-1994 period, following the introduction of free primary education in Malawi, do not have good command of the English language due to falling education standards, unlike migrants who were

primary school leavers in the pre-1994 period (Banda 2019). Additionally, following increased labour migratory flows since the mid-1990s, there is a 'scramble' for jobs in South Africa, not only amongst immigrants but also between the latter and South African nationals. As a result, jobs are more difficult to find nowadays. Consequently, most *selefu* labour migrants are forced to rely on *ganyu* [piece work] (Banda 2019). As a result of the scarcity of jobs in urban South Africa, and low wages, many Malawian undocumented migrants are forced to overstay to glean enough savings to avoid shame if they were to return home empty-handed.

Most informal sector jobs are low paying and workers are subjected to bad working conditions because the employers know that there are no labour laws protecting undocumented migrant workers. Some even get fired without due process. As a result of their illegal status, undocumented immigrants are forced to accept employment whatever the wage, risk, physical demands, or working hours involved. South African employers exploit undocumented migrants because of their illegal status. Seeking legal redress is often not a viable option for the migrants. Fear of possible police arrest, extortion, detention, deportation, and attendant police beatings keep the migrants unable to remedy their situation. Cognizant of the superior status, accruing from their citizenship, South African employers routinely assault and defraud their undocumented migrant employees (Hicks 1999).

In addition to the scarcity of jobs, lack of accommodation is another challenge Malawian undocumented migrants face in South Africa. Banda (2019) reveals that migrants face serious accommodation challenges:

Migrants face serious accommodation problems. They particularly face accommodation problems upon their arrival in South Africa. There have been cases

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where migrants have ended up being stranded in South Africa despite assurances from their relatives and friends that they will initially stay with them before securing their own accommodation and jobs. It was indicated that some migrants are cheated by their relatives and friends so that they literally have nowhere to stay. In such cases, as a last resort, they seek refuge in Malawi churches in different parts of Johannesburg. These churches provide temporary shelter and appeal to charitable individuals to provide temporary accommodation to these newly-arrived migrants until they secure jobs and their own accommodation (Banda 2019:171).

The acute shortage of accommodation for newly arrived migrants in South Africa speaks to the issue of the inhospitality of South Africa towards migrants of African origin. At a grimmer level, the hostilities in South Africa are also directed at Malawian undocumented migrants who managed to secure employment. Arbitrary arrests, detentions and deportations are some of the traumatic experiences of Malawian undocumented migrants in South Africa. Hicks contends that migrants accuse police of abusing them whenever they seek assistance, and of capriciously arresting, detaining and deporting them (Hicks 1999). After arresting undocumented migrants, security officials sometimes abuse their powers by threatening to deport migrants, who upon arrest, are considered detainees. According to Hicks, migrants allege that police and Home Affairs officials extort money from them to grant release from prison or detention centers, even after the migrants have proven their legal status as is necessary for them to continue residing in South Africa. If the official cannot extort money immediately from the detainee, they may prolong the dates of releasing the detainee to extort money. If extortion is ultimately unsuccessful, the detainee may be physically assaulted and then deported. Many migrants are unsurprisingly reluctant to press charges for fear of the long

detention terms they must endure while waiting for their cases to move through the judicial process. This reluctance to press charges reinforces the pattern of police abuse and brutality (Hicks 1999).

Not unique to Hicks' findings, our interlocutors' experiences corroborate this as an ongoing trend. M'bwana, for instance, faced police abuse when his visa expired. He reports being ill-treated by the authorities before he was barred from re-entry for five years (M'bwana, personal communication, 11 April 2021). Similar experiences of police assaults were reported by other informants. Failure to extort money from the apprehended immigrants, was followed by police extrajudicial actions including subjecting them to various ills before deporting them. In resonance with the issue of hostilities and the anti-foreigner attitudes of South Africans towards African undocumented migrants, on occasion climaxing into xenophobic violence, news media have recently reported growing anti-foreigner vigilantism directed against African migrants in urban South Africa. Afrophobic vigilante activists allege that migrants of African origin are occupying government-issued housing meant for poor South African citizens in the Johannesburg township of Alexandra, a thing that has, for them, motivated the formation of Alexandra Dudula, an anti-foreigner vigilante extremist group, which has attacked and harried African migrants in Alexandra, stopping them from doing business.

As if Alexandra Dudula were not enough anti-foreigner extremism, a more vicious anti-foreigner vigilante extremist group calling itself Operation Dudula emerged in Soweto. Operation Dudula blames foreigners for the increasing crime rate and for taking away jobs from South Africans in Johannesburg. Anti-foreigner ultra-extremist, political science graduate and pilot Nhlanhla "Lux" Dhlamini, was at the time (from June 2021 to July 2022) leading Operation Dudula. His anti-foreigner vigilante movement started by targeting suspected drug

dealers and people who were alleged to be occupying government property illegally. Just like Alexandra Dudula, Operation Dudula's scope of interest has grown to lately include forcing migrant owners of shops in South Africa to stop their businesses and leave the country (Al Jazeera 2023).

The anti-foreigner vigilante extremist movement also demands that local small-scale businesses, such as restaurants and shops, should employ only South African citizens. The anti-foreigner vigilante activists believe these small-scale businesses prefer to employ foreigners at the expense of South Africans. Yet, foreigners are paid way below the minimum wage by these small-scale businesses. They are cheap labor.

The attacks on foreigners by members of the Dudula movements are in media reports by the South African Broadcasting Corporation. The unpleasant experiences of foreigners, most especially in relation to Alexandra Dudula and Operation Dudula, the attacks on foreigners have provoked their reactions. For example, the One Voice of All Hawkers Association condemned the attacks on foreigners in South Africa as both unfair and disturbing. Due to constant attacks on them, foreigners have been living in fear. The hawkers' association has called on all South Africans not to discriminate against foreigners. This call came a week after Operation Dudula members marched to Johannesburg Park Station to demand that police allow only South African vendors to operate there (Eyewitness News 2022). This is contrary to the Kantian spirit of fraternity.

All Dudula movements are motivated and inspired by the same cause: to drive out undocumented African migrants from South Africa. Dudula is an *isiZulu* word meaning to "push back" or "drive back" (Masiko-Mpaka Nomathamsanqa, 2023). Thus, the urban Dudula

anti-foreigner vigilante movements want to drive African undocumented migrants out of South Africa. Unsurprisingly, for a country with very wide inequality gap between the haves and the have-nots, these two anti-foreigner vigilante extremist movements have recently received support from certain segments of the South African population, especially the people who still feel economically marginalized. They too believe that by ejecting African undocumented migrants from South Africa, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities will go to South Africans only. Malawians and other migrants in South Africa are living in fear of these anti-foreigner outbursts of anger and hatred, and there is growing public concern that these Dudula campaigns might soon lead to another explosion of xenophobic violence in the rainbow nation. Nothing could be more overtly anti-fraternity, anti-cosmopolitanism, and counter-regional integration than the emergence and specter of the three extremist Dudula village movements in urban South Africa today. Media reports have captured a wave of protests by members of Operation Dudula clashing with Xhosa, Zulu and Ndebele women, mistaking the latter for foreigners (Peralta Eyder, 2022). There was bitter and acrimonious exchange of words between Dudula and the migrants. It is shocking that the South African government is failing to address this crisis on political grounds. Additionally, the South African government is consciously or unconsciously fueling this anti-fraternity not only against Malawian nationals but against all immigrants. This is evident with the (sudden) expiry of the Zimbabwean Exemption Permits (ZEPs) in December 2022, implying that from 1 January 2023, majority of Zimbabweans in South Africa will automatically become undocumented immigrants. This means that South Africa is retrogressing instead of moving forward by chasing away about three million Zimbabwean asylum seekers who escaped political hubris and economic turmoil at the peak of the late-1990s land seizures in Zimbabwe (Daily Maverick 2022). Being South

Africa's neighbor, it is obvious that some South African citizens are resident in the erstwhile regional breadbasket and in other neighboring countries. The South African government should have been at the forefront of the modernizing train of cosmopolitanism in the region by discouraging these anti-foreigner sentiments.

As if Dudula extremist activism were not enough, Malawian undocumented migrants in South Africa have recently had to grapple with the far-reaching consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the prolonged lockdown in South Africa, Malawian undocumented migrants there have faced unemployment, starvation, destitution, and lack of healthcare and medicine, among other basic needs (Khamula 2020). As a result of the stringent conditions of the lockdown, to ameliorate their deplorable condition, some poor Malawian families in South Africa have had to be temporarily hosted by some well-to-do Malawians working or doing business in South Africa. The unlucky Malawians who were not hosted by fellow Malawians during the lockdown face many challenges. The fate of these destitute Malawian undocumented migrants who fell victim to the COVID-19 pandemic without necessarily being infected by the SARS-2 coronavirus remains largely unknown. The little that is known is that these stranded destitute Malawian undocumented migrants called upon the Malawi government to evacuate them as they were suffering greatly and mostly living on alms in South Africa.

In his State of the Nation Address, Ramaphosa at the time of the lockdown, South Africa's President Matamela Cyril announced when the country was transitioning to Level Four of the lockdown that his government would continue to provide basic needs to South African nationals only and would deny the same to foreigners. Facing this discrimination from the South African government, Malawian undocumented migrants asked the Malawi

government to have them repatriated home. However, the repatriation was marred with formidable management challenges. First, there was limited space in quarantine centers in Malawi. Second, there was severe resource poverty in the country. The government of Malawi could not afford to provide upkeep and maintain preventive health measures for, and give medicines to all the evacuees in the quarantine centres. The government had inaccurate figures of the evacuees, probably because they were undocumented migrants, most of whom had used clandestine means to enter South Africa (Khamula 2020).

While Malawian undocumented migrants grapple with hostilities and harsh conditions in the rainbow nation, other Malawian undocumented migrants living in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province and surrounding areas have been devastated by natural disasters emanating from tropical cyclones leading to torrential rains and flash floods (SADC 2022). Khumalo [not his real name], one of our informants living in the province, a natural disaster victim narrates:

> The floods have displaced a lot of Malawians living in the province, and also some of our friends have been injured but cannot access health services as they don't have legal documents to allow them to access such services. In addition to these, most Malawians here and other immigrants are now homeless, others have been squatting in school classrooms. Only a few Malawians who have connections elsewhere in South Africa have been lucky to be evacuated from this province and are now hosted by their friends or families (Khumalo, personal communication, 25 April 2022).

The natural disaster exacerbated the inhospitality of South Africa towards foreigners. Similar experiences were also shared by other informants who just returned from KZN

Province and surrounding areas. They all cited a lack of shelter, food, clean water, electricity, and other basic needs as a serious problem for Malawian undocumented migrants in natural disaster-struck KZN. Another informant, Mike, reports the death of Malawians in KZN and Limpopo, another South African province. Mike said:

We have problems with shelter, food, clean water and other basics. We have lost our friends from Malawi living in this province and other surrounding areas due to the floods. Some Indian well-wishers have constructed tents where we [foreigners] are sheltered. But other people are sleeping in their workplaces because they have nowhere to go since the heavy rains started. As I am talking now, there is no water or electricity, and people are struggling, but what can we do since this is not our home? Almost 30 people have died here, including Malawians, I know two people from Malawi who have lost their lives, and one hails from Blantyre and the other from Mangochi. Further to this, factories were closed because there is no water and electricity, and we have nowhere to go. The [Malawi government's] buses that have come to repatriate people back home have gone to Limpopo. I couldn't hesitate to get into one of the buses if they were to come here to take us back to Malawi (Magalasi, personal communication, 26 April 2022).

This additional testimony on the inhospitality of South Africans towards natural disaster-struck Malawian undocumented migrants — a traumatic experience of great proportion — augments our argument that South Africa is replete with hostilities towards migrants of African origin including Malawian undocumented migrants, underscoring our philosophical position that such Afrophobic hostilities are anti-fraternity, anti-cosmopolitanism, and they ultimately undermine regional integration efforts in the SADC bloc.

Arbitrary arrests, detentions, and deportations are extreme manifestations of South Africa's hostilities towards African undocumented migrants, including Malawians. For example, Amin Shukurani, who was once detained for failing to show the police valid documents to stay in Johannesburg, South Africa, said that he was arrested, incarcerated in police custody, prosecuted in court, shipped to the infamous Lindela Prison, and then released soon afterwards (Shukurani, personal communication, 27 May 2022). Similarly, John Jafali, an ex-migrant of Mangochi District, says that upon arrival in Johannesburg, he secured a job as a truck driver, but was soon caught and sent to Lindela Prison due to lack of a work permit. On a Tuesday morning, he was stopped by police officers on patrol. To John, this was surprising because they were unusually serious and declined to accept the bribe he offered them. Jafali suspects a fellow Malawian might have betrayed him out of jealousy. Consequently, he suffered needlessly in prison. He and other detainees arrested on similar grounds had to wait for an increase in the number of detainees before they were deported. Jafali lost his car and belongings in his house in South Africa. He was left with only the clothes that he wore that day. He did not even have his cell phone. Upon returning to his village in Mangochi, Jafali was too ashamed of himself as he had returned empty-handed. He had failed to financially support his family (wife, two children and other dependents). After a while in Malawi, Jafali acknowledged that he gradually picked up, as he started a taxi business in Mangochi (Jafali, personal communication, 27 May 2022).

Another informant, Mr Fahaji Mtenje shared a similar experience. Mtenje was previously deported from South Africa to only return in 2019, after securing a passport this time around. Due to a lack of valid documentation on the eve of his deportation, Mtenje reports that the police brutally beat him before his arrest. He also reported more brutal beatings

by the police who went witch-hunting for undocumented migrants in various workplaces. The police shipped him to Lindela Prison. He narrates the inhuman conditions in Lindela Prison thus:

While at Lindela, we were not treated in any way different from the prisoners there. We could only eat the time it pleased the warders to give us food. To make it worse, the food wasn't good at all. I developed a strange skin disease that was unprecedented in my medical history, and this was due to poor hygiene in Lindela. As if that was not enough, there were inmate fights in Lindela. It was not only Malawian nationals there. Others were from Nigeria and Mozambique among other countries. They combined people of different characters, so inmate fights were a daily occurrence, such that some Malawians including myself were wounded at the time the numbers had piled up, ready for the deportation flight. It was unbearable (Mtenje, personal communication, 29 May 2022).

Similar to what Mtenje experienced in Lindela, another informant Charles Malekano, an ex-inmate of Lindela Prison and former deportee, in substantiating what the former said, tells a slightly different story:

There is zero freedom in Lindela. The pains I felt at the time we were thrown in Lindela cut deep in my heart. I could even cry, asking myself why Africans are mistreating each other like this and yet we say Africa is one! The inhuman treatment I received together with others in Lindela was terrible. You cannot differentiate a murderer, convict, and foreigners imprisoned in Lindela. At the

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time of our deportation, I was told I was banned from entering South Africa again. However, when I was deported home, I immediately returned to South Africa using a new passport bearing different names. The names in my old passport were those of a *persona non grata* (Malekano, personal communication, 29 May 2022).

The horrid experiences of these four informants are far from unique. Other studies resonate well with the present study. For example, in her paper titled "After Mines: The Changing Social and Economic Landscape of Malawi – South Africa migration", Jessica Johnson lamented the fact that there is indeed significant uncertainty and insecurity for Malawian migrants in South Africa. In an oral interview with Lucius, a resident of Chiradzulu district, Johnson says he told her that one should be happy to see that one can go to South Africa and return alive. He reportedly said in Johannesburg one cannot walk about freely without being stopped by police and asked to produce valid papers (Johnson 2017).

It is indeed apparent that the rainbow nation is no longer rosy with its ever-rising levels of youth unemployment. Recently, Derrick Chihana confided in Malawinews24 that the situation in South Africa has rendered many Malawian youth in the rainbow nation destitute and prone to promiscuous conduct for their survival. Like Lucius, Chihana recalled untold suffering during his stay in South Africa. Chihana, who hails from traditional authority Wasambo in Karonga district, alleged that after failing to secure employment, most Malawian girls were involved in sex work for survival (Malawinews24 2022).

This common language of traumatic experiences of Malawian undocumented migrants in South Africa from various sources of literature including oral literature is evidence enough

that the challenges of being an undocumented migrant in South Africa far outweigh the benefits. The hostility and inhospitality, the anti-fraternity and anti-cosmopolitanism of South Africa, and hence its contribution to the derailing of the SADC bloc's regional integration efforts, are loud and clear in these Malawian undocumented immigrants' testimonies of arbitrary arrests, police beatings, extortion, detentions and deportations.

Conclusion

This paper drew on Kantian philosophy, particularly his concepts of the "cosmopolitan right" and "fraternity" in order to support the paper's position that all Southern Africans in particular, and all Africans in general are brothers and sisters. Evoking the cosmopolitan right and the spirit of fraternity [brotherhood/sisterhood] as well as Ubuntu hospitality — people who wish to migrate can relocate and stay permanently or temporarily in any country within the SADC subregion, in sub-Saharan Africa as well as in the rest of Africa. Xenophobia runs counter to and defeats the whole purpose of both fraternity and Ubuntu. Xenophobia violates cosmopolitan rights. Essentially, decrying and bemoaning the slow pace of policy implementation especially at the SADC subregional level, the paper argued for the speedy implementation of the various treaties, or multilateral agreements, aimed at regional integration, and at improving migration governance primarily in the SADC subregion where Malawi and South Africa are located. The paper argued that free-market capitalism or the neo-liberal system in Malawi is responsible for the continued flight of youth to South Africa. Malawi's predominantly agricultural economy is youth-unfriendly as most of the youth have no access to land and even when they gain access to land through inheritance, they have no start-up capital to cultivate it productively. Climate change adverse effects leading to drought and erratic rains (i.e., flash floods and tropical cyclones) have exacerbated food insecurity. Worse still, government

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anti-poverty and anti-hunger interventions such as the ongoing Affordable Input Program (AIP) have yielded negative results and hence no impact on poverty and hunger because they are marred by serious planning and policy implementation as well as logistical challenges.

This study focused on the plight of 'undocumented' Malawian migrants, tentatively categorizing them as "economic refugees" because it is poverty and economic hardship back at home that force them to migrate southwards, most often to South Africa. The study emphasized that Malawians are forced by their economic circumstances to migrate southwards, especially to South Africa. Malawians in South Africa end up as 'undocumented migrants' or what this study has characterized as 'economic refugees'. Neoliberal economic conditions force migrants out of Malawi to South Africa, which itself has embraced neoliberalism. Thus, the embrace of migration as a solution has limited utility. Neoliberalism exacerbates economic and social stressors. The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change further intensified the challenges faced by Malawian migrants. They also contribute to increased xenophobia and the anti-immigrant violence that it provokes.

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Kant argues for the extension of 'the rights of man' beyond the nation, a right that he christens

the 'cosmopolitan right.' Kant bases the cosmopolitan right on certain observations about the

empirical conditions of human existence, particularly the sphericality of the earth. For Kant,

the earth belongs to all of us—and so any one person can migrate and relocate anywhere in

the world. By implication, the Southern African region belongs to all Southern Africans. For

Kant, the cosmopolitan right is coterminous with laws of hospitality, defined broadly as 'the

right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone's territory.'

Kant came up with the ideas of cosmopolitan rights and laws of hospitality in order to

counteract the growing 'nationalism' in Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution of

1789. For him, this narcissistic nationalism led to lawlessness of international relations, and,

more worrisomely, to the exclusion and stigmatization of foreigners within states—leading to

xenophobia in nation-states. Kant argues strongly that individuals have a right as citizens of the world to try to establish community with all, and to this end, to visit all regions of the earth.' The phrase 'community with all' can be rendered as 'fraternity' or brotherhood and sisterhood. *Fraternity* is etymologically derived from the Latin noun '*fraternitas*' meaning a state or condition of being brethren. Thus, in the Kantian spirit of fraternity, it can be contended that all the peoples of the SADC bloc belong to one community as brothers and sisters. Invoking the cosmopolitan principle of fraternity, South Africans should look at foreign nationals entering their country as their brothers and sisters. Kant further argues that all humans can claim a right to such travel [i.e., migration], arguing that '[Humans] may only claim a right to resort, for all men [and women] are entitled to present themselves in the society of others by virtue of their right to communal possession of the earth's surface.'

Pan African News Agency (PANA) reported that on 19 March 2021, Mali's Minister of Malians Abroad and African Integration, Alhamdou Ag Ilyene inaugurated CAREM in Bamako, Mali.

There is also the UN-supported Pan-African Forum on Migration (PAFOM), which is a continental consultative process on migration and human mobility issues in Africa.

Of course, we approach the idea of a United States of Africa (USA) with caution. The United Nations Organisation (UNO) was envisaged over two thousand years ago by Immanuel Kant. Even then, Kant struggled to construe such a global organization of states due to the issue of the sovereignty of nation-states. Matthew Altman (2017) argues, "If the United Nations is a deliberative body in the Kantian mold, as some people believe it is, then military force would seem to be ruled out as counterproductive and contrary to the terms of international cooperation. Instead, states would engineer the reform of other states by means of UN resolutions and other kinds of

diplomatic and economic pressure. Kant conceives of the league as 'a federalism of free states', not despotic states." (Altman, 2017: 184)

For several decades, since independence, tobacco has been the topmost cash crop in Malawi, contributing more than 60 per cent of forex earnings. This is no longer the case now. For example, burley tobacco that was grown mostly by smallholder farmers mostly in the Central and Northern regions is now a thing of the past. Diversification from tobacco to alternative cash crops in contemporary Malawi has been and still is happening at a tortoise speed.

An ordinary passport-36 pages costs 90,000 kwacha (83.20$), express service at 160,000 kwachas while ordinary passport normal service with 48 pages costs 130,000 kwacha and an express passport 48 pages costs 180, 000 kwacha. This is too expensive for an ordinary Malawian living below the poverty line. 1$ was at1,081.76 Malawi kwacha at the time of writing. (Standard Bank Forex Rates, as at 21st August 2023).

We carried out fieldwork in Mangochi rural from April 1st to 30th 2021, and then returned from April to May 30th 2022.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU   African Union

AFCFTA   African Continental Free Trade Agreement

AIP   Affordable Input Program

CAREM   African Centre for studies and Research on Migration

GoM   Government of Malawi

IMF	The International Monetary Fund
IFIs	International Financing Institutions
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MYP	Malawi Young Pioneer
MPFA	Migration Policy Framework for Action
PoA	Plan of Action
REC	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	The Southern African Development Community
TEBA	The Employment Bureau of Africa
WNLA	Witwatersrand Native Labor Association
ZEPs	Zimbabwean Exemption Permits

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Illusion or Reality: A Recontextualized Perspective of 'the American Dream' in Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*

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Abstract

'The American Dream' motif is one that has been deployed in productions of American literary icons for centuries with different outcomes for the characters portrayed. Despite a plethora of fiction being devoted to the motif from African migrants' perspective, not many studies have explored the actualization of the Dream by characters in such texts. In *Behold the Dreamers* (2016), Imbolo Mbue presents the lived experiences of new African diasporans. This study looks at the outcomes of the quest for 'the Dream' by Mbue's characters, through a mimetic reading of her novel and based on Harold Bloom's notion of 'Party of Hope' and 'the American Nightmare'

as exemplified in the treatments of the Dream motif by several writers. Mbue, while presenting the paradoxical notions of illusion and reality of the Dream, also portrays struggles by both citizens and migrants, to achieve the tangible and intangible of its ideals. Findings reveal; that essentialization and discrimination inhibit the attainment of the Dream by many African migrants; that the attainment of college education is a huge factor in the realization of the tangible of its ideals, while the attainment of the intangible seems illusory for many migrants. The conclusion is that several factors prevent the realization of the Dream by many contemporary African migrants. Notwithstanding the haziness of the distinction between the tangible and intangible of the Dream, the attainment of materiality by citizens themselves creates more problems that happiness, an integral part of the Dream, remains elusive.

Keywords: The American Dream; African migrants; mimetic; motif

Introduction

"Everyone wants to come to America, sir. Everyone. To be in this country, sir. To live in this country. Ah! It is the greatest thing in the world" (*Behold the Dreamers*, p. 39).

The above quote from Imbolo Mbue's debut novel, *Behold the Dreamers* (2016), encapsulates the mis/conception of America by many citizens of countries of the global south. The American Dream, an enduring motif of the American literary tradition, is one expressed in great literary works by generations of writers. It is not only a metaphor encapsulating the very crux of American life, it is a trope central to works of American literary writers across generations and races. It is also one deployed by writers of both the old and the new African diaspora.

For so long, America has remained the desideratum of many aspiring migrants from several countries because of images projected of the country in both traditional and new media. Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers* explores the motif, from an African migrant writer's perspective, thereby exposing its complexities. This assertion is evident in the portrayal of the novel's characters, Americans and migrants, males and females, who are deemed to be in pursuit of one dream or the other. The novelist's witty depictions of the ambivalences and ironies of both the tangible and the intangible of the American Dream's ideals can be gleaned from the experiences of the characters vis-a-vis the backdrop of the United States of America epitomizing migration as the story of mankind. The deployment of the motif, whether deliberate or otherwise, gives an insight into its relevance as a literary aesthetic even in contemporary times.

This analysis of Mbue's novel draws on Harold Bloom's grouping of parties of 'hope' and 'nightmare', as presented in the edited book, *Bloom's Literary Theme: The American Dream* (2009). In the introduction of the book of twenty essays, Bloom asserts that the treatment of the theme by Ralph Waldo Emerson is hinged on hope, hence his tag of some writers, who have treated the theme the same way, as belonging to Emerson's 'Party of Hope'. The other side, he labels, 'American Nightmare'. This category features writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, T. S. Elliot and Bloom's own contemporary, Phillip Roth based on his notion that they have propagated the theme as a nightmare. The categorizations by Bloom are based on the following: the outcomes of the motif's engagement by various writers and the haziness and attendant ironies of the trope. Irrespective of the ambivalences that may exist in the treatment of the American Dream motif by various writers, Bloom concludes his introduction by affirming that literary metaphors' treatment by writers may be varied but they are welcome as they are enablers of persuasion. He declares, "We welcome literary metaphor because it enables

fictions to persuade us of beautiful untrue things" (xi). This study acquiesces to the notion of motifs and themes in literature, being not only useful in expressing the thoughts of writers but also connecting them to readers.

Dreamers, situated within the new African diaspora fiction, offers a lens to view the antithetical realization of the American Dream by migrants and Americans alike. It is an African migrant tale that reflects the quest for the American Dream by the subjects of the novel. Mbue's engagement with the theme is an addition to the literature already produced on it. The Dream is veiled by the novelist in a way that shows the interconnectedness of hope and nightmare, as her characters contend with its ideals. The paradoxical nature of the Dream, especially its intangible ideals, is expressed by Neni, Mbue's deuteragonist in *Dreamers,* in the following quote: "How could anyone have so much happiness and unhappiness skillfully wrapped up together?" (p. 157). This paper, therefore, examines Mbue's intervention in African migrancy discourse in *Dreamers* as a reflection, a representation and an interpretation of the world of African migrants in America; a world that the writer is equally a part of.

The novelist's use of non-fictional details and perceived representation of the realities of many African migrants inform the mimetic reading of *Dreamers*. The representations of real events, with effects over the novel's plot and setting, make the migrant tale a compelling one. Some of the non-fictional elements of the novel are the 2008 financial crisis in the United States of America, a financial meltdown with domino effect in most parts of the world and the references to the 44th President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, the very first non-white president of the nation. His emergence is considered both a modern and classic example of the attainment of the American Dream.

This effort, therefore, is an exploration of a contemporary African migrants' narrative that focuses on the American Dream motif from Bloom's critical perspective of parties of 'hope' and 'nightmare'. Insights can be drawn from the depiction of the importance of the motif, and its contradictory manifestations in the lives of many of Mbue's characters. Not only do we have the concurrence of hope and nightmare in the experiences of the characters, the tangible and the intangible ideals of the Dream seem to be about the characters' upward social mobility alone. The perceived realistic representations of the lives of many African migrants in the United States informs the inference that Mbue has undertaken the process of depiction, a sort of mimicry. Through the juxtaposition of some Americans' experiences in the novel with those of migrants, Mbue is seen to be beaming a light on everyone considered to be in the same pursuits for a better life. A mimetic reading of *Dreamers* enables the realistic assessment of the representation and interpretation of migrants' worlds in it.

Literature Review

Kimberly Wong in a 2016 article makes a clear assertion that the notion of equal opportunity touted in the United States Declaration of Independence is clearly appealing and drawing migrants to the United States from all over the world. Wong asks a pertinent question as to whether the Dream has ever been accessible to everyone. The question may have been answered by a recent article written by Clara R. Riggio (2021) on defining the American Dream, a quantitative work, which sees the attainment of the Dream in the 21st century as clouded by various interpretations of the motif itself. Sandra Sousa's study is one of the few on Mbue's

novel that considers the quest for the dream or a journey by African migrants as a means of representing and understanding what is considered foreign and 'Other'. In her article, she posits that many writers of the new African diaspora are all developing the journey motif narratives of confrontation of Western and African values. To her, the Jongas' dream in *Dreamers* remains solely a dream.

Mbue's novel has also received the attention of Saray Wyman (2019) with focus on the role of food in the text. She recognizes the fact that the novelist may have achieved her own American Dream, but the same cannot be said of her African migrant characters. Irrespective of the interpretations of many critics, the novel's importance lies in its depictions of the realities of many contemporary African migrants. Another study on the *Dreamers* and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* is the one by Odey Okache (2022) which looks at the concepts of migration and return in both novels. The crux of the study is the identification of push and pull factors of migration and the conditions that propel return migration. While these cited works are of utilitarian value to a better appreciation of Mbue's *Dreamers*, this paper aims at exploring the Dream motif, considered not an old myth, but rather one for the ages.

The American Dream, More Than a Cliché!

That the ubiquitous American Dream has gained traction in many of its literary and artistic productions needs no gainsaying. It is a dream couched in some set of ideals with roots in the United States Declaration of Independence (1776); a phrase regarded by many as a myth. Its ethos is contained in the following well-crafted sentence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain

unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (United States Declaration of Independence, paragraph 3). This quote spells out the equality of all men and their rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Of all the definitions of the phrase given, the one by James Truslow Adams in *The Epic of America* (1931), a book written during the Great Depression, is one often quoted by scholars and critics. To Adams, 'the American Dream' is a "dream of land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with the opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement" (p. 404).

Many writers, who have deployed the dream motif as an aesthetic in their works, are well aware of its haziness and attendant ironies. Scholars and critics, who engage with its discourse from several perspectives, consider it to be raising the hope and optimism of Americans as well as that of migrants. William A.V. Clark (2003) in his discourse of the dream, observes that those "who have sought to interpret the American Dream have suggested that it has always been more than the search for material wellbeing. Even so, the evidence suggests that the search has been more material than not" (5). In a recent study by Jennifer Wolak and David Petersen (2020), the authors look at the dynamism of the Dream from 1973 to 2018. The data gathered suggest the Dream's realization may be responding to changes. While Clark views the Dream as extending beyond materiality, Wolak and Petersen finger racial inequality as reason for its decline.

In spite of the wide usage of the American Dream motif in several literary productions, its clear meanings are yet to be established, even in contemporary works. This is more so as the reality of the Dream infers a better, richer and fuller life "often viewed in terms of economic and material prosperity such as buying your dream house or car" (Madeline High, 2015, p. 1). Equating the Dream with material success alone narrows its definition and conception. For many migrants, their quest is mainly driven by the pursuit of material well-being buoyed by tales of the

successes of individuals and the prosperity of the United States. Generations and centuries of flows of immigrants have not diminished the United States' status as the desired destination of many would-be migrants. Gonzalo Schwarz, a recent migrant to the United States, in a 2018 presentation to the Archbridge Institute reiterates the cliched notion of the Dream being solely about wealth. He submits that for him and many others, their migration has pivoted largely on the country's culture of entrepreneurship. The lofty American Dream continues to draw immigrants to the United States, even when Edward Hess (2019) observes that the digital age has the potential to be disruptive and transformative of its realization in contemporary times. However, it is not out of place to conclude that the Dream is the very crux of American living. And in Jende's words at the onset of his American sojourn in *Dreamers*, "America has something for everyone" (p. 40); an obtuse declaration built on hope.

A nuanced perspective of what the Dream encapsulates is expressed by Nurayn F. Alimi (2018), who asserts that it manifests "out of a labyrinth process of experiences that are products of history, politics, race, class, culture, literature, as well as gender and power relations in America" (p. 175). This observation is informed by the differing outcomes of its pursuit for different people based on their gender, class, political leaning and of course their race. The common denominator for all is calling America home. Those who constitute the old African diaspora in America have been because of almost 400 years of slavery, rendered powerless and are largely disenfranchised from the full realization of the Dream. For those who constitute the new African diaspora in America, the dialectic of 'Centre' and 'Margin' are thrown into the mix. The same status, which was accorded to their kin of the old African diaspora, is extended to them. The otherness of African migrants makes the attainment of the Dream herculean and for

some, insurmountable. The Dream, a motivating force of American civilization, thus becomes elusive to many African migrants.

With the views of various scholars and critics in mind, and with the dream motif being an enduring one in literary productions across genres, generations and races, it is worth examining how Mbue's subjects in her novel, *Dreamers,* have fared in living 'the American Dream'. The illusory Dream is considered central to Mbue's narrative, as her characters find themselves in a struggle to actualize its tangible and intangible ideals. Much of contemporary African diaspora fiction is devoted to exposing the lives of African migrants in the West and their efforts at surmounting the obstacles they face while integrating into their new society. Their quest for a better life or El Dorado is premised on the belief that their dreams of success and ideals of the good life are realizable in the West, most especially, in the United States. This is underscored by the lack of opportunities in home countries making the power of the Dream more alluring. Whether openly stated in such works or not, there is the perceived notion of journeys, both physical and metaphorical, undertaken by African migrants for a better life in the global north. Unfortunately for many African migrants, they realize their 'otherness' only upon arriving at their preferred destination (America) and the cliche, 'the grass may not be greener on the other side', becomes real. In fact, many African migrants erroneously assume that the dream of success and upward mobility works for everyone in America.

Reality of the American Dream

Since its entrance into the public domain and national consciousness, the phrase, 'the American Dream', has assumed a life of its own. In Mbue's *Dreamers,* there are representations

of the quests by African migrants to attain material success, considered to be the tangible aspects of the American Dream. The experiences of the Jongas are captured in *Dreamers* and are juxtaposed against those of the white American family, the Edwardses. This narrative technique draws parallels between the unique experiences of the two families. The parallels are what Alimi (2018) refers to as "existential ambivalences and attendant ironies of the American Dream experience" (p. 5). This implies that for the Jongas, who are African migrants, the tangible is unrealizable. Jende Jonga loses his job and his asylum application and therefore his family has to return to Africa thereby signaling the end of the Dream for them. For the Edwardses, the American family that Jende works for, the tangible is realized and is reflected in their material well-being. Besides the two families, there are other African migrants and Americans in the novel who constitute a synthesis of the conceptualization of the dream's reality and illusion, and thus provide a better understanding of what the Dream entails in contemporary United States. Other African characters in the novel like Winston, Bubakar, Betty, Fatou and Olu are representations of realities that fall within 'hope' and 'nightmare' groupings of Bloom. American representatives in the novel such as Vince Edwards and Leah, Clark's secretary, embody shades of realities of the ideals of the Dream.

In defining the tangible and the intangible elements of the American Dream, some of its symbols need to be highlighted. The tangible of the dream mainly focuses on material well-being, consisting of, but not limited to the following: ownership of a home, possession of cars, abundance of material goods and the ability to pay for college education of the children or the next generation. All of these are concomitants of a middle-class lifestyle. The intangible is "embodied in the Bill of Rights (freedom from religious or political persecution)" (Clark, p. 2), and of course, the equality of men and the pursuit of happiness enshrined in paragraph 3 of the

United States Declaration of Independence. The intangible of the Dream entails a life that is more internally satisfying based on individuals' aspirations.

The hope of attaining the tangible of the American Dream makes Jende celebrate the offer of a chauffeur job by Wall Street bank executive, Clark Edwards. With the princely salary of 35 thousand dollars per annum comes the optimism and modest ambition of saving for a home, financing Neni's pharmacy training and a bright future for their children. Meanwhile, the Edwardses, who represent the upper-middle class citizens, take the attainment of the tangible for granted. Clark works as a bank executive, which guarantees his family some level of material comfort and well-being. His family besides an apartment in Manhattan, owns a summer home in the New York State suburb, the Hamptons. Financing the education of the sons poses no problem, and the family generally exudes material well-being.

If the asylum failure dims the attainment of the Jongas' American Dream, the financial meltdown of an institution like Lehman Brothers, where his boss is an executive, sounds the death knell of his living the Dream and exposes the real American society. Clark Edwards switches to Barclays Bank following the takeover of Lehman Brothers with subsequent bailout funds provided by the government. To the chagrin of the whole populace, newspapers and blogs blow the lid that bank executives like Clark have been using the bailout funds to engage the services of prostitutes in brothels. Meanwhile, Jende in keeping strictly to his employment terms, fails to do Cindy's bidding, a situation which ultimately puts him in jeopardy. For not following through with the directive that he records Clark's meetings and dalliances in a journal, Cindy pressures her husband to fire Jende. Coming from an African background, where polygyny is accepted, and a man can choose to be with multiple women, Jende is surprised at Cindy's move to monitor her husband. By not squealing to Cindy about his boss, Jende displays integrity,

which Clark himself lacks in his dealings as a bank executive and as a husband. If there is ever any hope of attaining the symbols associated with the tangible of the dream, Jende's loss of the chauffeur job ends his prospects and can be considered as a nail in the coffin of his personal and family's hope.

With the loss of the fairly well-paying chauffeur job, Jende returns to the life of doing dishes in restaurants, jobs whose remunerations cannot pay the bills. This depiction by Mbue places the text in the league of Bloom's party of 'nightmare'; this is because, in this instance, there is no self-fulfillment. The tangible and intangible of the American Dream appear to gradually slip out of the Jongas' reach. Jende and Neni's hope of rags to riches narrative in America has a major inhibitor – lack of legal documentation that confers the right to live and work in America. However, rather than succumb to the defeat and the farce that their quest is turning out to be, the family maintains a unified front in the face of challenges. The Jongas represent the essence of family in many African societies. By the end of the novel, the Jongas embark on a return journey to their native Cameroon with the determination to improve their condition there.

The Edwardses, whose lives are intertwined with the Jongas, are white Americans who have achieved the tangible of the Dream. However, the attainment of the tangible, which is reflected in the wealth and luxurious living of the family, does not translate to happiness for them. Clark Edwards becomes so engrossed in his work that he hardly spends time with his family. There is the perception by his wife and sons that his job is given priority over them. Cindy, in spite of the financial success of her husband, feels unloved by him, and laments the circumstances of her birth and her mother's love for her younger sister. Her first son's decision, to drop out of law school and to travel to India in search of 'the Truth" proves to be Cindy's

greatest let-down. She spirals into a life of alcohol and drug abuse, which eventually leads to her

untimely death. Vince, her first son, sums up his parents' condition as follows: "they continue to

go down a path of achievements and accomplishments and material success and shit that means

nothing because that's what America's all about, and now they are trapped" (pp. 103-4).

Unfortunately, the Edwardses are true representatives of many successful American families,

who contend with issues of drug abuse, alcoholism and infidelity with the attainment of financial

success. Cindy's drug and alcohol abuse is witnessed and captured on camera by Neni while

working at the family's summer home in the Hamptons. It appears that Cindy never recovers

from all of her hurts, most especially for being caught by Neni at her lowest ebb following

excessive drug and alcohol consumption. As a punishment for orchestrating the firing of her

husband, Neni blackmails and extorts Cindy of ten thousand dollars with the photograph of the

stupor situation in the Hamptons.

Exploring the attainment of the tangible of the dream through Winston, Bubakar, Betty,

Fatou and Olu reveals mixed results. Winston and Bubakar are migrants who experience the

realization of the tangible of the Dream. They are both career lawyers, whose education plays a

part in their realization of the tangible of the Dream. Winston has come so far from being a

grocery cashier in Chicago to life as a lawyer on Wall Street. He has tapped into all opportunities

presented by joining the US Army on his arrival in the United States after winning the country's

visa lottery. He embodies all of the defining symbols of the American Dream. He is educated,

has a dream job, owns an apartment in Manhattan and his remuneration at the law firm where he

works guarantees a middle-class lifestyle. The financial support Winston readily offers to his

cousin, Jende, attests to his material well-being. Bubakar, Jende's lawyer, also an African

migrant, personifies the tangible of the Dream, as he boasts of a home in Canarsie, among other

material possessions. He revels in the educational attainments of his three children, an evocation of securing the future of the next generation, which also symbolises the success of his sojourn in America. The tangibility of the American Dream for Winston and Bubakar is premised on their acquisition of a college education. Conversely, the path to achieving the tangible of the Dream may have become complicated for those without college education like Betty, Fatou and Olu, who are also African migrants in Mbue's novel.

Betty's long stay in America has not in any way translated to a middle-class status. Although she is a legal migrant, she remains on the threshold of achieving the tangible of the Dream. Her efforts to become a nurse still fail to yield the expected result after seven years in nursing school. Fatou, the hair braider, on the other hand, even ranks below Betty in attainment of the tangible of the Dream. She remains poor and an undocumented alien after 26 years in America. Her obvious achievement largely remains her seven American-born children, who may likely improve her lot in the future. It is important here to also mention that Clark's American secretary, Leah, still struggles with what living the American Dream epitomizes. She is said to be clinging to a job that makes her miserable, which increases her blood pressure and keeps her awake at night. After the loss of her job as Clark's secretary, a job to which she has devoted 15 years of her, she begins the journey of job hunting again without much success.

In his book, Clark asserts that "Dreams are intangible, and the American Dream is no less intangible than so many other dreams of our futures" (p. 2). Achieving the intangible of the American Dream which is premised on freedom from religious and political persecutions appears realizable for everyone. The dream of equality for all remains a mirage and the pursuit of happiness is illusory for many - migrants and Americans. It may thus appear that achieving some elements of the intangible of the American Dream may be a fantasy.

The breakdown of the Edwards family and Cindy's drug and alcohol problem serve as an eye-opener for Neni. The attainment of financial success, the tangible of the American Dream, has not translated to the intangible (happiness) for the Edwardses. Although Clark tries to patch things up with his sons following his wife's death, the reality is the permanent nature of the family's loss of a dear wife and a devoted mother. The delusory nature of the American Dream manifests in the complexities of experiences of the American characters in the novel. Cindy chokes to death from her vomit. The disintegration of her marriage, frustration from her beloved son, Vince, not picking up her calls and the apparent futility of wealth all become too much to bear. Where the American Dream has been a fantasy for the Jongas, the Edwardses in spite of the realization of the tangible of its ideals, find themselves struggling for happiness – a feature of the intangible of the Dream's ideals.

Vince Edwards' quest for 'the Truth' in faraway India shows the hollowness that characterises the acquisition of wealth and upward social mobility - the reality of many Americans. He considers his dad, Clark Edwards, to be struggling to find his essence in life because he has gone "off pursuing illusions" (p. 341). The novelist's strategy may have been to use Vince, to 'unindoctrinate' Jende about the lies he has been fed about the United States and to highlight the paradoxical notion of the Dream. Vince leaving America for India in search of his soul's wellness is considered symbolic. While citizens of the global south are desperate to move to the United States, Vince, a young white and privileged American decides to get away from his country in search of 'the Truth'. Migrants are daily flocking to America from other places in search of financial success, but here is Vince, the representative of the privileged Americans, longing for the wellness of his soul and true happiness by embarking on a journey to India, a developing country.

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Although the American Dream is one expressing the equality of all men, the experiences of the Black race in the United States over centuries have proven contrary to that. These are experiences that have stripped the Black race of their dignity since the period of slavery and that still place them at the lowest rung of the racial ladder in contemporary times. People of African descent cannot be said to have been given an equal footing as their white counterparts and those of other races. Calvin Jillson's *Pursuing the American Dream: Opportunity and Exclusion over Four Centuries* (2004) examines America's complex and ever-evolving social landscape. The book discusses the contexts that have shaped the Dream and patterns that have excluded some, leaving their dreams unrealized and their hopes in tatters. In terms of power relations, the people of African descent are the subalterns in America, a situation based on the intervention of history whether in the guise of slavery or colonialism.

For the people of the old African diaspora, living the American Dream comes at a great cost, owing to racism and more importantly, the fallout of slavery, which still plagues them almost two centuries after it ended. Those of the new African diaspora, the new entrants and migrants, who have nothing to do with the slavery antecedent of the old are also not exempt from essentialization and discrimination experienced by people of their race. Robert Young in *Colonial Desire* (1994) notes the racial profiling of Africans based on the hierarchical scale of the Great Chain of Being. He says: "Predictably the African was placed at the bottom of the human family" (p. 6) and unfortunately, this view remains endemic in Western discourses. The promise of equality of men, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, remains a myth for people of African descent, whether of old or new African diaspora.

Essentialization and discrimination continue to hamper the actualization of the dream by many contemporary African migrants. The socio-cultural American environment and power

dynamics between the predominantly white population and the Black minority place the African migrants at a disadvantage. If the African migrant is an undocumented one, then the situation becomes even more bleak. While white migrants are able to quit their 'otherness' and morph into the white population in little time, the same is not the lot of African migrants as they remain perpetually the 'other'. In fact, the tendency to essentialize people of African descent based on the color of their skin is one that is addressed by most African migrant writers. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in *Americanah* (2013) uses the blog section of her novel to highlight how 'blackness' of African migrants is a significant identity marker. She writes: "Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So what if you weren't 'black' in your country? You're in America now" (p. 255).

The impression many whites hold about Africans is gleaned from the heart-to-heart discussion between Neni and Cindy Edwards in *Dreamers*. Cindy, a white woman narrates to Neni how she has navigated her way out of poverty and has moved up the social ladder. On being told by Neni that she also hails from a poor family, Cindy quips: "No, you don't understand," [..]. Being poor for you in Africa is fine. Most of you are poor over there. The shame of it, it's not as bad for you" (p. 123). The misrepresentation of Africa in Western discourse as a poor continent, and one whose poverty defines her peoples, limits the potential of African migrants in the United States. On arriving in the United States, Neni realizes that the sitcoms she has been exposed to before migration do not portray reality. She gradually comes to the realization that her preconceived idea that "America gave everyone, Black or white, an equal opportunity to be whatever they wished to be" (p. 312) is illusory.

The reaction of the security man at Lehman Brothers to Jende's appearance when he shows up to be interviewed by Clark Edwards is epic. The Black security man is so surprised, at how a fellow black shows up well-dressed for an interview, that he "looked up at his face, looked down at his suit, smiled, and asked if he was trying to become a stockbroker or something" (p. 4). When Jende responds that he is there to interview for the position of a chauffeur, the guard then relaxes and says: "Good luck with that" (p. 4). Many citizens of the old African diaspora can be said to have become used to their otherness and the social construction which has inferiorized them. The attempt by any member of their race to aspire to something greater is scorned. They are perpetually constrained and the opportunities available to them are tinged with obtrusive inequality.

The American Dream not only embodies the aspirations of both migrants and citizens, it also provides the avenues by which they can be realized. The pursuit of the Dream is one that comes at a great cost to migrants, especially those who do not have 'paper', the 'green card', which confers the right to stay and work in America. Migrant literature is generally rife with undocumented migrants assuming false identities in order to work and plotting untrue or exaggerated stories to convince the immigration system of host countries to grant their asylum applications. As an asylum seeker, Jende looks grotesque, lying about a father-in-law who may likely kill him on his return to Cameroon. His sin is that he impregnates his then-girlfriend, Neni, and thereby truncates her education. Meanwhile, the attainment of the tangible and the intangible of the American Dream by migrants is tied to the possession of the 'green card'. Just like Jende, many undocumented migrants succeed in obtaining asylum by making up improbable stories of persecution in their home countries.

An obvious easy means of acquiring the 'green card' is through marriage to a citizen or someone with legal status. This route to securing a permanent residency is prevalent among migrants and narrated in most fictional works by new African diaspora writers. Neni, owing to her desperation to remain in America with her family, mulls the idea of divorcing Jende for a few years. This plan is to facilitate an 'arranged marriage' to a friend's cousin to acquire legal status. The plot involves her remarrying Jende once her plan succeeds. She is discouraged by Pastor Natasha who poses the following questions: "Why would you want to divorce your husband and risk your marriage for papers, Neni? Why? Is America that important to you? Is it more important than your family?" (p. 284). Neni at this point realizes that her family is more important than living in America. Without securing a legal status, migrants' hope of living the Dream becomes nightmarish, and returning without achieving material well-being attracts derision of those back home.

The journey to living the American Dream begins for the Jongas with Jende fabricating details to sway the consular officer to grant his visa in the first instance. And while leaving for the United States, he convinces himself that "he wouldn't see Cameroon again until he had claimed his share of the milk, honey, and liberty flowing in the paradise-for-strivers called America" (p. 19). However, reality dawns on him upon arriving at 'paradise'. Jende finds himself sharing a basement apartment with six Puerto Rican guys and working three jobs. Several jobs and little rest are his lot in order to pay for his wife's student visa and his son's visiting visa. When Neni and their son eventually join him, the battle to get a permanent residency becomes a great quest of its own. Mbue's novel's mimetic quality is hinged on the presentation of non-fiction details, as well as synchronic representations of the realities of contemporary African migrants. The path followed by the Jongas in order to live the American

Dream is the reality of many African migrants. They often secure a non-immigrant visa to travel to countries of the global north, and with the intent not to return till material well-being is achieved. On arrival at their destination, they seek asylum by cooking up stories that will turn things in their favour. The 'green card', referred to as 'papier' throughout Mbue's novel, places migrants on the path of living the American Dream and attaining citizenship of the host country.

Much more than the representation of the experiences of the Jongas, Mbue's *Dreamers* is devoted to capturing the experiences of African migrants generally. There is the depiction of African migrants undertaking menial tasks and working several jobs in order to pay their bills. Jende, before the relatively well-paying chauffeur job, does three low-paying ones and after his sack as Clark's driver, takes up the readily available one of doing dishes. It is a grueling job that strains him physically but pays little. Winston initially works as a cashier in a grocery store before joining the United States Army. Bubakar narrates how his first three years in America make him realize "America can be hell" (p. 321). Countless other African migrants go through the same routine of working many less-paying jobs before eventually achieving upward mobility and middle-class status. With lack of education, migrants like Jende, Neni, Fatou, Olu and countless others have their path to achieving the Dream complicated and are left disillusioned, broken and defeated. Winston knows very well the odds against Black male migrants, who lack college education. He puts it succinctly to Bubakar and Jende: "without a good education, and being a Black African immigrant male, he might never be able to make enough money to afford to live the way he'd like to live, never mind having enough money to own a home or pay for his wife and children to go to college" (p. 322).

The undocumented status of Jende and his family and many others of their ilk, their cultural distinctness in a place other than home, leave them occupying the in-between spaces in

America. The occupation of liminal state, by many African migrants, depicts a frantic state of waiting and transformation; a state of waiting for what their fate will be at the immigration department and transformation due to culture-mix with the possibility of them becoming hybridized. Jende finds himself in a liminal space of becoming a legal migrant, a situation that almost drives him to the precipice, with negative impacts on his health and his relationship with his wife and son. Husband and wife soon realize the illusion that the American Dream is turning out to be for them and other characters in the novel - Africans and Americans alike. Through the sublime portrayal of the experiences of the Jongas, the American Dream turns from hope and idealism to disillusionment, and for the Edwards family, their attainment of the tangible makes a feature of the intangible (happiness) elusive.

Jende's failure with his asylum application sends him on a downward spiral and signals an end to his American Dream. Once his application for a permanent stay is refused, and the story of his father-in-law planning to kill him on his return to Cameroon falls flat, he begins to feel despondent with signs of violence and intolerance. He becomes so fearful of his imminent return to Cameroon without achieving his dream; a situation, he knows will present him as a failure on arrival at home. The news of his father's passing, and his unfortunate immigrant status preventing his attendance of his funeral rites being the first son, bear heavily on his health. He begins to experience excruciating back pain. No medication he takes assuages the pain and on consultation with a doctor, he is told the reason for his pain is stress. Right there and then, he makes his decision: "I want to return to Limbe" (p. 305). And as noted by Aaron Bady (2016), if the novel opens with Jende's American Dream being premised on the opportunities and economic strength of America, the point where he consults a doctor who adduces his back pain to stress becomes antithetical to his optimism at the beginning of his American sojourn. Jende

realizes the futility of his quest without legal status and the drudgery characterizing the life of an uneducated immigrant in America. His American Dream turns to a nightmare as he opens up to Neni: "I don't like what my life has become in this country" (p. 306).

Neni's redemption through education, which her American pursuit promises, becomes threatened because of Jende's decision that they return home. The hope of a pharmacy education in America becomes unrealizable owing to Jende's failure to secure asylum and his induced sack as the Edwardses' chauffeur. Neni also fails to persuade her College Dean to recommend her for scholarship. The Jongas' young son, Liomi, begins to exhibit signs of insecurity once he overhears his mum's conversation with someone on the phone about Jende's failure to secure an asylum. All of the avenues through which Neni hopes to circumvent the unfavourable asylum application in order for her family to remain in America come with complexities. She jettisons the idea of divorcing her husband and getting into an arranged marriage for the purpose of the 'green card'. She is equally talked out of giving her son up for adoption to a gay couple so he could remain in America.

Winston, Betty and Bubakar may have legal status, but they still face the trapdoors of essentialization, and discrimination experienced by people of their race. Winston and Bubakar are the closest to the realization of the tangible of the American Dream by African migrants. They become integrated into their new society with an upwardly mobile lifestyle. Betty cannot be credited with achieving the tangible of the American Dream. Her 30-year plus stay in America has not yielded a middle-class status. Fatou has been in the United States for 26 years without 'paper' and probably has been able to stay on because she does not require a residency document for her work as a hair braider. She expresses her regrets at not being able to visit her aged parents in Africa and laments the fact that her seven children born in America do not

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identify as Africans. Tunde and Olu, whose family Neni strives to model hers after are presented as just getting by. Jende makes his wife realize that Tunde and his family do not have such a good life in New York: "he didn't think Tunde was so happy with his life. How could he possibly be, spending all those days of the week around seafood, coming home at the end of the day smelling of fish" (p. 307).

Mbue's treatment of the perennial motif, the American Dream, is in continuation of that of American literary icons across generations, races and genres. However, her deployment offers contemporary African migrants' perspectives and experiences. Some of the American literary texts where the motif is engaged present different outcomes for the characters portrayed. Benjamin Franklin's iconic book, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1793), Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* (1909), F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Richard Yate's *Revolutionary Road* (1961) and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977) are efforts at profiling the paradoxical outcomes of the Dream's realization espoused in their different narratives. The treatments of the Dream in some of the literary texts credit the egalitarian American society for helping hard working and driven people achieve their potentials. Some consider the Dream a myth, owing to racial and class inequalities, while some are seen to be pushing the opinion that the Dream is not realizable by everyone. The racial coloration to the trope is very glaring in works by African American writers. Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) both present how racial inequalities and discrimination against Blacks preclude them from living the Dream. And just as writers of old African diaspora, Mbue's *Dreamers* also presents racial inequality and 'otherness' of new

African diasporans as impediments to the realization of both the tangible and the intangible aspects of the American Dream.

Conclusion

Clark asserts that those, who have sought to interpret the American Dream have suggested that it is more than the search for material wellbeing. According to High (2015), it implies a better and fuller life, which should not be measured only in economic and material terms. The intangible of its ideals, such as the pursuit of happiness, freedom from religious and political persecutions, are indices to measuring a fuller life as well. There is no denying that all races, to a great extent, enjoy freedom from religious and political persecutions in America. As the Jongas wind down their stay in New York, the narrator laments that the Jonga children, although Liomi and Timba will gain a lot by the Cameroonian move, will also be losing more. They are presumed to likely going to "be deprived of freedoms, rights, and privileges that Cameroon could not give its children" (p. 362). The most contentious of the intangible is the pursuit of happiness and the equality of all. On whether happiness is realizable by all, the novelist through Jende rhetorically asks: "Is there anybody who is happy all the time?" (p. 105); and this may well be the reality of all human beings irrespective of material comfort, position, race or clime. It is the novelist's spin on the motif that if the tangible of the American Dream is realizable, the intangible, such as a happy state, may not be dependent on material well-being. Happiness is considered an impermanent experience for all humans. A life of material comfort, where the rich are plagued by infidelity, drug use, and various forms of addiction, and where they constantly battle depression does not qualify as an idyllic or a happy state. The following lines by Jende are a good epilogue for the illusion that the American Dream is for many Americans and African migrants. It supports Mbue's argument:

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In America today, having documents is not enough. Look at how many with papers

are struggling. Look at how even some Americans are suffering. They were born in

this country. They have American passports, and yet they are sleeping on the street,

going to bed hungry, losing their jobs and houses every day (p. 307).

The attainment of the tangible of the American Dream for African migrants, based on Mbue's novel, is largely premised on the acquisition of college education. Winston and Bubakar are successful with the tangible of the Dream, owing to their college education. Jende and Neni would have fared better but for lack of college education. The odds are just too many against Jende and those of his class. Without the 'green card', a college education, and compounded by the race factor, the attainment of the tangible of the Dream is arduous. The concurrence of illusion and reality, in the exemplification of the tangible and the intangible of the dream puts some of Mbue's characters in the 'party of hope' and others in that of 'American nightmare'. In retrospect, Jende realizes that the quest to live the American Dream may be fleeting and concludes that "Good times must come to an end, just like bad times, whether we want it or not" (p. 371). The novel ends on a positive note as Jende and his family return to Cameroon upbeat. Before leaving America, Jende assures his wife "I will do everything I can to make you happy in Cameroon," [..]. "We will have a very good life there" (p. 336). His optimism generates positive energy that will be needed to make the conditions at home work for him and his family. The return journey, also a trope of the new African diaspora fiction, is a forced one in this instance. Beyond the American Dream being a motif and an aesthetic in Mbue's novel are the provocative depictions, calling attention to the experiences of her characters, and indirectly cautioning other potential African migrants to take a look before they leap.

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