

Determinants of Feminization of Migration in Tsholotsho District of Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Tsholotsho District is one of the most significant contributors of migrants in Zimbabwe. Until recent, many of these migrants have been males, with females remaining behind assuming both feminine and masculine roles. Of late, however, females are increasingly venturing in migration expeditions. Why is this the case? Are women taking up economic roles in a society that has largely relegated them to familial responsibilities? What determines their increasing participation in a male dominated practice? These questions are answered in this paper based on a research conducted in Ward 5 of Tsholotsho District in 2016 as well as continued interaction with interlocutors till present day. The results indicated that reasons for feminized migration cut across different realms such as fleeing unfavourable economic conditions, to unite with their migrant spouses, to contribute towards diversifying household income sources, and fleeing unhappy marriages and burdensome familial controls among others. This led the researcher to firmly conclude that feminization of migration is a new reality and future of Tsholotsho's migration trajectory, one that will be accompanied by resultant problems and opportunities. It will require therefore, careful migration management systems in the country to harness the benefits of this migration typology while offsetting the possible problems.

Key Words: Determinants, Feminization, Migration, Tsholotsho, Females

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to delineate the determinants of feminization of migration in Tsholotsho District of Zimbabwe. This is a highly migrant society that has seen increases in incidents of feminization of migration unlike the previous epoch where most females remained behind assuming masculine roles and taking care of families in the absence of their male counterparts who largely took the economic roles of fending for families abroad (Thebe and Maviza, 2019). The question is unpacked in detail in the following sections: (1) beginning with a glance into the concept of feminization of migration, (2) a literature review on the determinants of migration, (3) the methods used in the study, and finally, (4) the findings and (5) conclusions drawn by the researcher. The next section looks at conceptual issues.

Conceptualising Feminization Of Migration

The migration discourse in recent times has been livened by the empirical reality that females are increasingly becoming part of migration stocks (now constituting 48% of total migrants in the world) [12]. This is due to increases in women's emancipation and equality, availability of opportunities for women in industrial and services sectors and other various factors spanning from economic hardships, conflict and effects of climate variation [40]. Women now migrate independently for economic and survival reasons as opposed to the previous dominant paradigm of family reunification or accompanying of husbands or other male family members [31, 21]. Feminization of migration is defined by IOM [21:23] as "the growing participation of women in migration". The term, however, remains subjective in literature, and thus requiring

contextualisation [22, 38]. This is because, while some regions have more females than males in migration flows (such as East Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean), others have more males than females (such as Africa and South Asia) due to varied reasons; resultantly, scholars argue that feminized migration cannot be universally or homogeneously applied [10]. Although women are now considered active participants in migration, scholars [11, 10, 8] agree and attest to the fact that gender remains under studied in the discourse of migration especially in Africa which begged a study of this magnitude.

OVERVIEW: DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S MIGRATION

Studies have revealed that females migrate largely for reasons related to autonomy, such as fleeing unhappy marriages or traditional gender roles [6]; At times search for new relationships and refuge from political persecution or running away from family pressures such as pressure to marry and violence (structural and physical) by male partners motivates females [7]. Other than that, some women migrate in search of economic independence and family reunification among others which this section will delve in detail [6]. Some analyses [14] points to migration being determined by natural disasters such that prevalent diseases (such as malaria, TB, HIV and most recently Ebola) in rural areas have affected the capability of families to produce crop yields thus affecting their mainstay economic activity. This incapacity incentivises women to reach out for other survival strategies such as migration. Moreover, empirical reality accentuates that women (in the health sectors) in the developing countries have been in demand in developed global labour markets for instance Ghanaian and Nigerian nurses to the UK, and Caribbean nurses to Canada [14]. This confirms the hypothesis of economic determinants of migration by Sir Arthur William Lewis [28], as imbedded in his Dual Sector Model which envisages a transition from a traditional, agricultural rural sector that is stagnant and incapacitated to a booming modern industrial and urban sector which has a high demand for labour that is in surplus in the agricultural sector or movement from declining points to growth points [46].

Women are also forced to migrate by conflict situations or various social, economic, political, religious, cultural, and environment related strife [30]. Contemporary examples include conflicts in South Sudan, Syria and most parts of the Arab world. Such movement detracts women, exposing them to serious vulnerability marked by limited access to (scarce or abundant) resources to cope with family demands and discernable increase in physical and psycho-social violence [15].

Climate variability is another significant stimulant of women's emigration the world over [16, 18, 34] owing to its negative externalities on especially agriculture, the mainstay of rural livelihoods (with 70% of the world's population dependant on it) , spanning from high temperatures that are being experienced in most parts of the globe, which has seen a remarkable reduction in crop yield and a drastic decline in food production over the past two decades [34, 16]. This scenario again has arguably plunged the family unit into food insecurity, hunger, ill-health, limited access to income and ultimately poverty, which has coerced women, the most vulnerable to search for means to diversify their livelihood strategies let alone share livelihood responsibilities in order to ameliorate their dire situations, thus opting for migration [34].

A research on migration and social networks in Bangladesh [30:14] presuppose that "women's migration is sensitive to the household assets: both land holdings and education of the heads of their households are negatively associated with their likelihood to migrate". This means females will derive the propensity to migrate from availability of wealth or resources within the family, such that those from poor families might find it difficult to finance migration. This

view is opposed by [25] who pinpoints that land holders tend to migrate less compared to the landless households. This means that landless households, faced with increasing livelihood insecurity and limited power thereof in the household, may find the drive to migrate for the reasons of emancipation and livelihood security. Such explanations will probably suite the females who in most cases are at the receiving end of local structures and institutions of landownership or property rights. What is apparent from the foregoing is that wealth ownership and migration are not directly related.

[35] has it that females also migrate to unite with their male spouses, what is referred to as family reunification¹ in migration lingual. Moreover, [30] also connote and affirm that female migration can be motivated also by the hope and probability that they will get married in destinations. Single and divorced women have a greater propensity to migrate than married women because they have fewer responsibilities and greater freedoms to make decisions [ibid].

[1] in a study in Ghana enunciated increasing correlates between educational attainment and migration determination. Although lacking a gender specific connotation, their study found that after completing secondary or tertiary education, people are significantly prone to migrate. This however is not a converse relationship. At household level, they established that, migrants are less likely to come from households with a more educated head, since an educated household head is better placed to find and access locally available opportunities, thus reducing the incentive to migrate [1]. Again, this can be contested, since education plays a key role in the understanding, interpretation and analysis of socio-economic and political trends obtaining, which if they are not favourable (push factors), could be an incentive for migration to destinations with more favourable conditions (pull factors) [3, 11]. To be more precise, the case of Nigeria cited earlier has witnessed myriad of professionals leaving the country since the turn of the millennium [3]. To induce gender into the discussion, it becomes interesting to find out the interplay among education, migration and women. What is apparent is that the traditional social construct in African societies, in the past, maintained education as a preserve for the boy child. While educating a son was a family investment in its future, educating a girl child was a waste of family resources [37]. Culturally perceived to be the family's breadwinner and through which family names were carried, boys were given the first opportunity when it came to allocating/distribution of family resources towards education [37]. However, this education related prejudice against females has seen significant changes, again due to an increase in advocacy towards women's rights and the consequent policy craft that is gender literate and competent worldwide [ibid]. It becomes therefore fascinating to juxtapose this currently obtaining landscape in education with the highlights of recent times, of increased feminization of migration, in trying to understand the critical question of what role education has played in determining the feminization of migration.

Economic transitions also determine migration patterns of women for instance; it was an emphasis on the service sector by most South American economies that prompted much of female migration to that region [45]. This was in such a manner that the low-skilled and low-income jobs were shunned by the local women in those countries hence leaving a big gap needing to be filled, an opportunity which third world females were willing to embrace. In a study of Asian Australian migration dynamics, such a scenario was referred to as 'international

¹Reunification is a migration movement motivated by the need to re-unite or reintegrate with another relative who would have migrated before the present incumbent migrant. So females migrate also to reunite with their spouses. At times the whole family migrates following the migrant relative (father or mother) (Tevera and Crush, 2010; Ncube, 2010).

labour division of reproduction' or the 'commodification of emotional labour' and later 'care drain' [44]. Again, these empirical realities endorse the economic accentuations by Todaro [43] that migration is determined by economic incentives, earning differentials, employment opportunities and expected income in destination areas. Todaro here is stark in bringing out the verity that, the alluring (python) nature of potential destinations at times, if not most of the times, leads to an increase in risk taking propensity by migrants in the hope that their entrepreneurial instincts would in the future pay dividends [ibid]. This probably explains the high incidence of even illegal and irregular incidences of women skipping countries, leaving family behind and with no guarantee of jobs or livelihoods in the destination.

Prior experiences indicated that the international labour sphere and immigration policies usually favoured male employment versus female employment [35]. As a result, women were shoved into low income jobs, with low status, less skill requirements, with poor working conditions and sometimes exploitative environments as in the case of Bolivian women working in Argentina and Brazilian factories [35, 29]. But as has been mentioned in the case of Ghanaian and Nigerian nurses to the UK, and Caribbean nurses to Canada, women have gradually become educated and can now qualify in better jobs that were previously a preserve for man [14]. Moreover, recent trajectories of female migration show improvements worldwide in migration management and a saturation of women's human rights campaigns and movements leading to reduced inequalities or exploitative working environments [20]. [19] lists Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Georgia, Lebanon, Liberia, Turkey and Uganda as examples of countries in which the legal and policy environments have somewhat improved, noteworthy efforts including financial compensation as part of Turkey's return programme and specific efforts towards property restitution across the Balkans, which had largely been completed by 2007. Concurring with the foregoing and to use a scenario closer home, [17:133] posited that:

...in April 2009 the Department of Home Affairs of South Africa announced its intention to grant Zimbabweans in South Africa a 12 month special dispensation permit on the basis of the 2002 immigration Act section 31(2) (b). This permit grants the right to legally live and work in the country. As a complementary measure, a moratorium on deportations and a 90 day free visa for Zimbabweans entering South Africa have been implemented...

Such initiatives, one can critically argue, have potentially given the impetus to foreign nationals to migrate including the female contingents.

Social networks also play a crucial role on a personal level in determining migration as they provide information and social, economic, political and even psychological assistance to prospective migrants [47]. From an inter-country perspective improvement in communication systems and road networks and most importantly affordability of transport costs results in easier movement of people, goods and services [30]. Female migration is thus motivated by this context.

Furthermore, females migrate for economic reasons, in search for a better life, to reduce their poverty and the poverty of their families [22]. Dzingirai et al [13] in a study in Zimbabwe confirm this assertion of poverty reduction being a stimulant of women's migration. Most of those who migrate in Zimbabwe will be out of employment due to de-industrialisation in the country [36] living on less than a dollar a day, or with their consumption expenditure per capita below the food poverty line and most importantly with limited livelihood diversification strategies or options thereof [4, 36]. As a result, their prime motivation for migration is derived from the need to better their poverty situation and that of their families (ibid). Although

poverty is severe in Zimbabwe (constituting 80% of the rural population) and hence possibly motivating the increase in female migration, migration does not (as it appears to) always ease poverty [45]. Moreover, experiences of women migration have remained with limited account in the Zimbabwean context [23, 24, 27] and not much has been done to detail the perceptions of those left behind on the determinants of women's migration. These and other limitations in literature justified this research to assess the dynamics of women's migration.

METHODS

This article is based on a study conducted by the researcher in 2016 in Tsholotsho District, for which one article has already been published in *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* [42]. The methodology employed was both qualitative and quantitative. Rigorous discourse analysis, literature study, and document review were influential in determining the questions asked in the field. The researcher gathered data using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); In-depth Interviews (IIs); and Questionnaires. A sample was selected from Village 5 of Ward 19, which has a total of 250 households. In these households, the researcher employed snowballing, assisted by his local networks, to select households with female emigrants. Household heads were targeted as key interlocutors and the research process lasted until saturation point was reached. The researcher also used purposive sampling to select key informants that were interviewed from various governmental and civil society organisations. For triangulation purposes, the researcher also conducted focus group discussions with men, women, and youths randomly selected in the community. He also has kept in touch with some of the informants until present day to refine his data and analysis. The aim for this paper was to gather opinions on determinants of feminized migration in Tsholotsho.

WHAT DETERMINES FEMINIZATION OF MIGRATION IN TSHOLOTSO DISTRICT?

The main objective of the study was to unravel the determinants of female migration in Tsholotsho District of Zimbabwe. A majority of responses (83%) indicated that females primarily migrated due to the dysfunctional economy characteristic of present day Zimbabwe. The poor economic conditions prevailing in Zimbabwe, coupled with poor academic performance by most females in rural settings owing to a number of factors necessitated the emigration of females in the study area. Some of the females failed to finish school because their parents could not afford to pay school fees. The amplification of failure in academic pursuits as a driver of feminized migration is also demonstrated by the fact that a majority of female migrants (57%) were reported to have had 'O' Level as their highest level of education, and hence the possibility that they migrated after they had failed. A key informant interview (KII) with the Village Head confirmed this when he connoted that "*many decide to go after they fail 'O' Level because they think they will get jobs in South Africa. Others go because they do not have the money to pay for their school fees*" (KII with a Village Head, Tsholotsho District, 2016). Similar sentiments were iterated by a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with youths, most of whom were facing a similar situation and were contemplating seeking employment in other countries to avoid being idle at home. These findings concur with what was gathered by Nzima et al cited in Thebe and Maviza [42] that people from Tsholotsho were disenfranchised by lack of education and especially failure in subjects like Mathematics and Science, which dwindled their opportunities of getting jobs in the local industry or government departments, thus leading to their emigration.

Earlier, Maphosa cited in Ncube [33] failure in education to be the reason for unemployment in rural areas. These findings are in line with arguments in Lee's *Theory of Migration* [26] as well as the Neoclassical theory of migration which notes that there are significant push and pull factors that determine a migration expedition. In this case the current economic situation in the country is pushing the females to other countries in search of better employment

opportunities. Furthermore, 67% of the responses indicated that some female migrants emigrated because they were invited and/or at least financed by either their relatives or friends in the destination countries. This confirms both Lipton's *Network Theory* and the argument by some scholars that social networks are essential in providing information and social, economic, political and even psychological assistance to prospective migrants [30, 47]. Notably, the possibility of finding a marriage partner in the destination countries also surfaced as a key driver (67%) of feminization of migration in Tsholotsho. This was confirmed from a response from a Key Informant interview with the Headman (*Umlisa*) of the area who posited that

many that go to other countries are youthful and go primarily with hope of getting married. Others are young parents (mostly impregnated) who would have separated with the fathers of their children, who then go to other countries in order to revive their marital hopes and to take care of the children they leave back home(KII with a Headman, Tsholotsho District, 2016).

Notably, [27] commenting on the life course asserted that life circumstances induce and incentivise females to migrate to destination areas; which is in sync with the findings from the study. In this case, the desire to marry becomes an incentive for emigration. Moreover, the demographic profiles of the female migrants show that the bulk of female migrants are youthful, 66% of the responses indicated that emigrants were between the ages of 18 and 34 years, 57% single, 3% divorced and 7% widowed, which substantiates/ authenticates the reason that some migrated with the hope of finding marriage partners.

Furthermore, twenty seven per cent (27%) of the respondents highlighted that some females emigrated as a way of fleeing unhappy marriages. Most African families are generally deemed to be spheres of patriarchal dominance, where women live under the iron hand of their male counterparts and gender dictates of their societies and these eventually push females to migrate [7]. Although the emigration of females was also attributed to women fleeing unhappy marriages, it is interesting to note that some females within the study area professed that they favoured the traditional way of male domination in families as it maintains 'order' in families. Critically, this notion may signify that these women lack a voice and independence from traditional institutions that entrench hegemonic male dominances which perpetuate and maintain gender inequities [9, 5, 22]. It also confirms the concept of gender which postulates that communities shape and define gender relations [22], and the (NELM) theory which speaks to power dynamics being key in shaping relations in families. In this case male domination seems to be the prevalent norm, to the extent of females accepting the status quo [11].

Migration was also seen as a pathway to flee family pressure and traditional demands on the females to marry. This was highlighted by twenty per cent (20%) of the respondents. This emanates from the traditional and cultural norms that oftentimes place expectations and demands on female and male members to marry at a certain age. When they fall short of the expectation, family members put pressure on them to fulfil the expectation, which eventually push females to emigrate. However, as much as this was a cause, it was not among the core reason for emigration in the study area. Search for a better life and opportunities elsewhere were noted as one of the significant causes of women's migration in the study area. This was highlighted by 60% of the respondents. Generally, as is in other regions in the country, the bad economic situation in Zimbabwe which has led to heightened levels of poverty over time and presented limited livelihood options for families is the core driver of female migration in the country, and in Tsholotsho [31, 40, 48]. This is in line with the provisions of the Neo-classical theory of migration which stipulates that the quest to shield one another from shocks or

vulnerabilities leads members in families to mutually agree on the best possible strategies to ameliorate the poverty situation, leading to the decision for migration [43, 26].

As a result of the deteriorating economic conditions in the country, family livelihoods were adversely affected and as such, some females emigrated due to the need to diversify sources of income and share livelihood responsibilities. This was noted by 20% of the respondents, while 33% cited spousal reunification as another determinant. In a key informant interview (KII) with an official in the office of the District Administrator (DA) of Tsholotsho District, it emerged that:

These women are usually called by their spouses who would have migrated before them. Some of them are left for over 10 years by spouses then they decide to follow them to save their marriages. These men will start other families or extra marital affairs in destination areas and stop caring or supporting their wives and children and the women then decide to follow them. Those that know the whereabouts of their spouses are blessed, because at times the women go just to search for their spouses who would seize to communicate once in destination areas (KII with an official in the DA's office, Tsholotsho District, 2016).

This concurs with what Piper [35] noted that despite, independent economic reasons being mentioned to be a major cause of feminization of migration in recent times (see also the NELM theory), accompanying of male spouses and family reunification remain significant contributors of global female migration stocks. In the study area, 33% of the emigrants were married women, and this substantiates Piper's assertion in the foregoing. More so, it confirms the life course model, were women are incentivised to migrate by the need to unite with their spouses, their reality of life at the time (5). Given the fact that a significant 70% of the female emigrants were mothers to between 1 and 4 children, 83% of respondents highlighted the drive to provide for their children as a major cause of female emigration in Tsholotsho especially for those females that are not married. This, coupled with the notion that 57% of the emigrants were single was reason enough for females to emigrate so as to provide for their children's diverse needs. The fact that they do not have male figures or perceived breadwinners, means they had to skip the borders to look for opportunities that will enable them to fend for their children. Moreover, most of them could not claim maintenance from the fathers of their children owing to several reasons, one being that some of the males were also migrants themselves and such could not be summoned to appear before the maintenance courts in Zimbabwe. These findings coincide with the pragmatist perspective that views these mothers as 'agile problem solvers' and 'good mothers' that have their children's best interests at heart [2]. More so, this speaks to the life course model that emphasises need for agility in times of crisis. In this case the life crisis is the situation presenting females in the study area were they are left with children with no breadwinning fathers.

Finally, seven per cent (7%) of the respondents attributed female migration in Tsholotsho to climate change and variability. Climate variability invokes family livelihood vulnerability which [32:3] defined as:

Insecurity and sensitivity in the well-being of individuals, households and communities in the face of a changing environment. Environmental changes that can threaten household wellbeing can be ecological... and can take the form of sudden shocks, long-term trends or seasonal cycles, thus increasing risks and uncertainties.

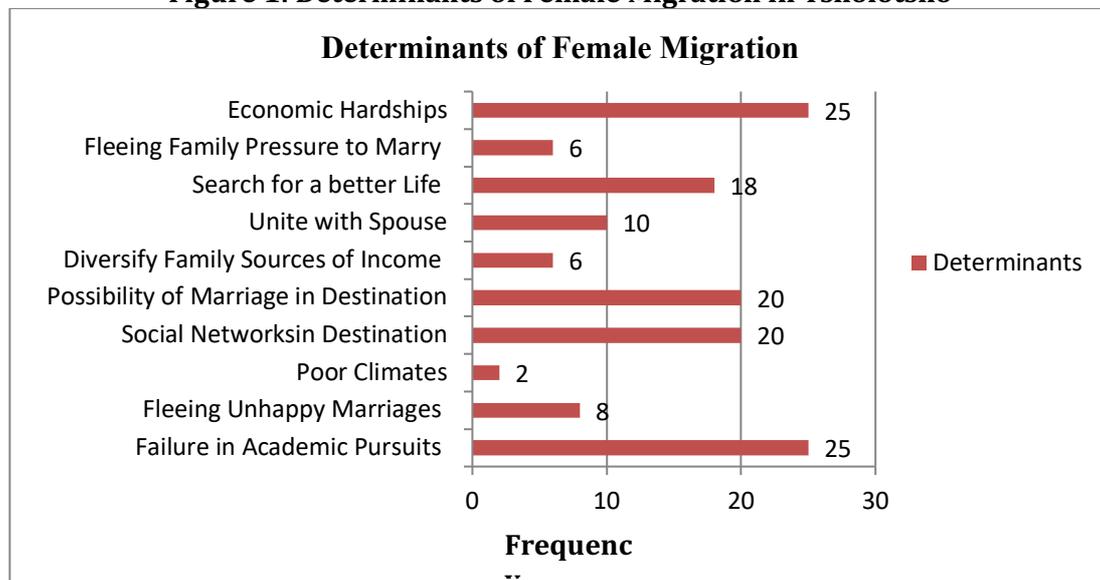
Although this is a small proportion of the entire sample, it aligns with [34]; [18]; and [16]'s assertions that climate change can stimulate emigration. It emerged that the gradual deterioration of climate conditions and continued prevalence of ill climate conditions has

pushed households in the study area to less and less depend on subsistence agriculture as the major livelihood strategy. This partly explains why climate variability and change was not among the core and direct determinants of feminization of migration. A respondent in an FDG with males indicated that:

We have been living like this for a long time without sole dependence on crop farming. We do many piece jobs such as grass thatching, brick moulding and petty trade and that is how we make a living. We won't wake up tomorrow going to South Africa because there is no rainfall or because there are floods. That is normal in this area (District), otherwise everyone would emigrate. When we have no options, then we can go" (FDG with males in Tsholotsho District, 2016).

A summary of the findings on the determinants of female migration is presented in the figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Determinants of Female Migration in Tsholotsho



Source: Field Work Findings 2016

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major determinants of female migration in Tsholotsho are the economic hardships prevalent in the country which make it difficult for women to make a living after failing in their academic pursuits. Moreover, the drive to fend for their children and the possibility of marriage in destination areas emerged from the area as contributing factors for female migration. On the other hand, some of the female emigrants' migration largely depends on the availability of relatives and friends who invite and or cushion them in the destination areas showing just how Social Capital is important in migration dynamics. It is evident from the study that feminized migration is a new reality likely to prolong in Tsholotsho judging from the rising female migration flows from this region. The same migration type is likely to come with both benefits and challenges that will need adept migration management to check the problematics and harness the benefits.

The researcher remains interested in the economic effects of feminization of migration in Tsholotsho District, for which an article could be published in the future. Other than this, another dimension of future study could be that of climatic factors causing migration. In relation to recent cyclones and storms that have hit most of Southern Africa inclusive of Zimbabwe, one would wonder the extent to which disasters will contribute to future migration flows and the related effects in the region especially on women and other vulnerable groups.

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