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The root causes for the migration of unskilled migrant farm labour: A study of Zimbabwean migrant workers in the citrus industry of the Sunday River Valley, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

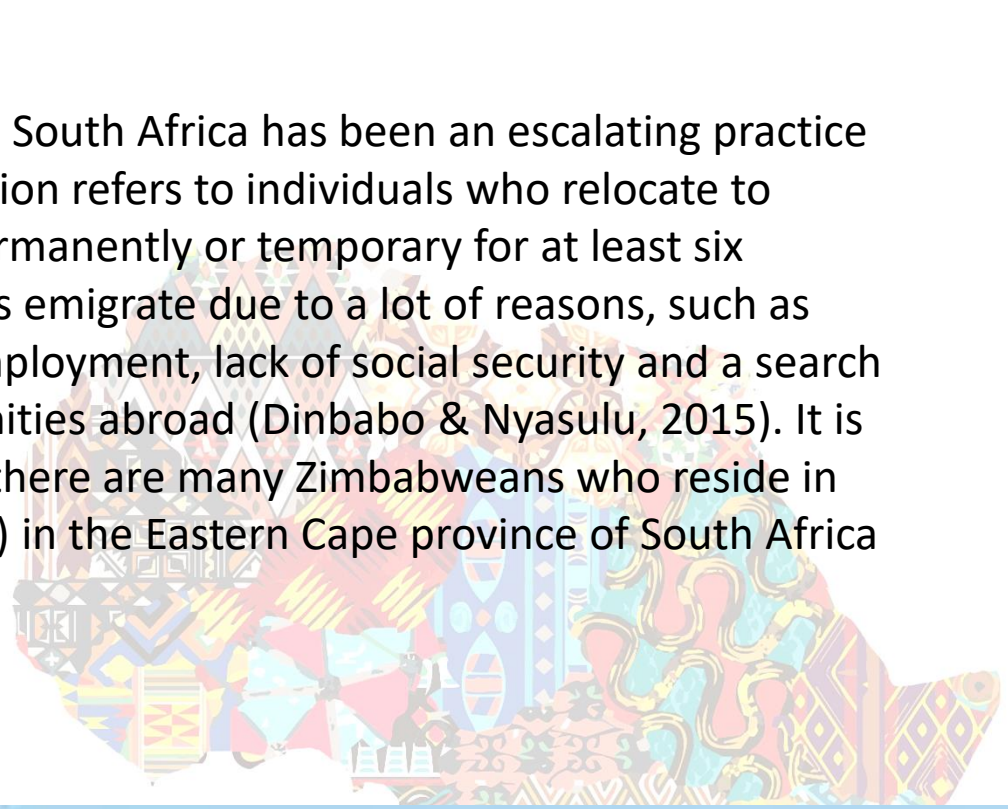
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Zimbabweans emigrating into South Africa has been an escalating practice of our times. The term migration refers to individuals who relocate to distant geographical areas permanently or temporary for at least six months (King, 2012). Migrants emigrate due to a lot of reasons, such as political instability, high unemployment, lack of social security and a search for better economic opportunities abroad (Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015). It is against this background that there are many Zimbabweans who reside in the Sundays River Valley (SRV) in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa



Push and Pull theory

For migration to take place, there are factors from the sending and receiving countries that facilitate reasons for migration. These factors are economic, social, political, legal, educational, cultural, and historical. These factors push immigrants out of the country or pull immigrants towards the receiving country simultaneously for migration to take place (Mejia et al., 1979).



General push factors that drive Zimbabwean workers to South Africa

Due to the authoritarian nature of the Zimbabwean government, reports of freedom of speech violations; government kidnapping and torture against all who may not share the government's ideology results in citizens emigrating to South Africa (Bloch, 2008; Ranga, 2013).

A push factor for professionals to seek employment elsewhere is what Ranga (2013) coins the 'misplacement of talent.' This occurs mainly in Zimbabwe, where individuals fill skilled job vacancies with political ties and political patronage. Individuals occupy skilled job vacancies with little to no qualifications for the job at all! Job opportunities are handed out under the umbrella of "corruption, nepotism, tribalism, and other similar forms of behaviour have permeated every level of organisational life" (Ranga, 2013:4).



An estimated 90 per cent of the Zimbabwean population is unemployed. Zimbabweans' manufacturing industry is on 'life support,' and massive black markets support millions of Zimbabweans' livelihoods (Maisiri, 2019:10). The standard of living in Zimbabwe is generally expensive. On the 13th of January 2019 the Zimbabwean fuel price inflated to the point it had the most expensive fuel price in the world (Maisiri, 2019:11).



General pull factors that drive Zimbabwean workers to South Africa

the availability of jobs for migrant labour. The migrant agriculture literature illustrates two main reasons why employers hire migrant labour creating a pull factor. The first being to fill labour shortages and the second is employer's preferences due to stereotypes surrounding migrant labour (Kruss et al., 2016).

South Africa has a higher standard of living, stable currency and economy



Push and Pull factors of Zimbabwean immigrant workers within the Sunday River Valley

Push factors

Several participants described their living conditions in Zimbabwe without basic utilities such as water and electricity. Kudzai,(27/11/2020) reports “we cook over firewood most of the time because electricity is too expensive, we could not afford to use the geyser or stove every day, only on some days. So, we would alternate by using firewood. Sometimes there won’t be any water for three days – you know how Zimbabwe is.

scholars such as Ranga (2013), Raftopoulos (2009) and Kiwanuka & Monson (2009), a key push factor is the human right violations carried out by the Zimbabwean ruling party, ZANU-PF. The respondents contradicted these finding nor did they acknowledge it as a reason to emigrate. Economic opportunities were emphasised by the respondents above political reasons because they (understandably) regarded their family’s livelihood as a priority.



Pull factors

Despite differences in age, sex, and marital status, all the immigrants whom I interviewed supported their family back home in Zimbabwe. Blessing (5/11/2020), for instance, sent as much as a third of his monthly income back home every month: “I have to buy groceries and send money back home to my mom”. Likewise, Kyle (14/11/2020) responded: “Sending school fees back home for my son is the main thing, and just supporting him. This highlights the gravity remittances has as a pull factor into South Africa for immigrants as a way to escape poverty.”

Job opportunities are always present



THE EASTERN CAPE AS A 'HAVEN'

Migrant farmworkers are prevalent in areas where South Africa and Zimbabwe share borders in the Limpopo province (Umezurike, 2008; Crush & Williams, 2005; Rutherford & Addison, 2007; Bolt, 2013).

Immigrant workers tend to lack the financial resources needed to travel deeper into South Africa and settle for finding farm jobs near the border areas. Undocumented immigrant labourers tend to be hesitant to travel further south without the appropriate visa documentation in fear of being arrested. The lack of work visas also limits what economic activities immigrants can participate in within the host country (Umezurike, 2008).



why immigrant workers would go through the trouble of using the little resources they have to travel to the southern parts of South Africa far from the border.

‘Why did you seek work on farms in the Eastern Cape rather than on those closer to the Zimbabwean border?’

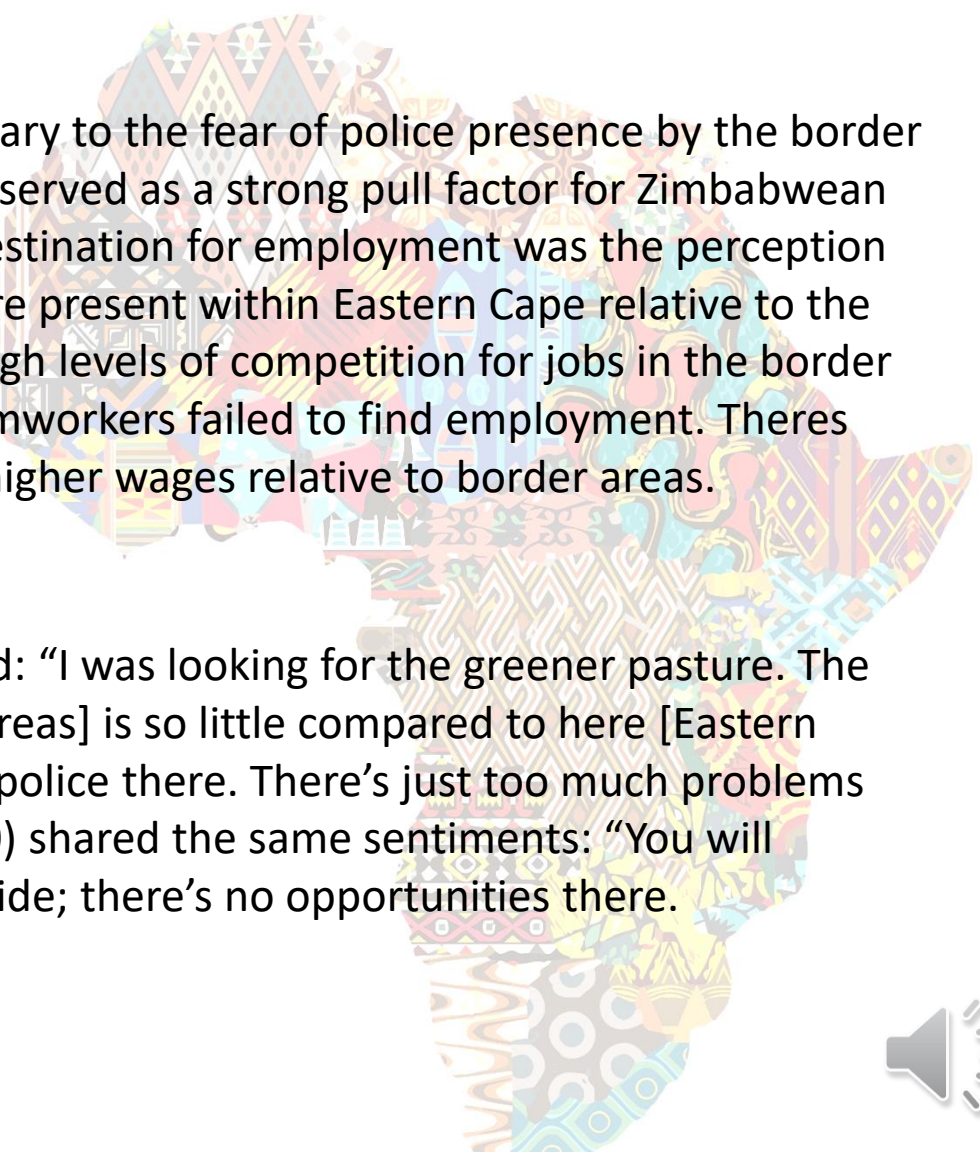
the respondents painted a picture of the Eastern Cape as a ‘safe haven’ when compared to the farms close to the South African border with Zimbabwe. This perception was based mainly on the fact that the Eastern Cape has less military and police presence to look for undocumented migrant labourers. The fear of deportation along the border is really due to the extensive police presence (Bolt, 2013). Unlike the studies done on farms near the ZimbabweSouth African border, such as Umezurike (2008), none of the respondents in my study experienced any military patrols in Eastern Cape. In short, as a place of employment, the Eastern Cape posed less risk of deportation for undocumented migrant labourers.



Umezurike (2008: 616), human rights violations are often experienced by migrant labourers during military border patrols.

These reports differ in Eastern Cape. As Blessing (5/11/2020) put it: “No one bothers you; no police person will ask for your documents.” Methembe (16/11/2020) shared the same sentiment: “My friend, at least here you can relax. There’s no pressure. No one will come after you about your visa.”





Another reason (but secondary to the fear of police presence by the border area) why the Eastern Cape served as a strong pull factor for Zimbabwean immigrants as a favoured destination for employment was the perception that more job vacancies were present within Eastern Cape relative to the border region. Due to the high levels of competition for jobs in the border region, some immigrant farmworkers failed to find employment. There's higher job availability with higher wages relative to border areas.

Kudzai (27/11/2020) noted: "I was looking for the greener pasture. The money that side [border areas] is so little compared to here [Eastern Cape] and there is always police there. There's just too much problems there." Chipso (20/10/2020) shared the same sentiments: "You will struggle to find jobs that side; there's no opportunities there."



Amongst the respondents, there was a conscious awareness that they are vulnerable because they did not have a work permit. As a result, they relocated to the most southerly parts of South Africa, such as the Eastern Cape, as a survival strategy. This observation illustrates that Zimbabwean farmworkers are adaptive to the poor working and living conditions by the border areas. Eastern Cape differs from other immigrant studies within areas close to the border such as Rutherford & Addison, (2007:1308) who reports heavy police presence by the border areas leading to a mass deportation

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