

## **A NEXUS OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND ECONOMIC PROSPECTS FOR MIGRANTS IN SELECTED PROVINCES OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The end of apartheid, integration into SADC region and reconnection to global economic world resulted in the increase of migration to South Africa. The aim was to identify the qualifications and economic profile of the migrants in relation to entrepreneurial skills that enhance the quality of life and sustainable livelihood of the migrants. The study was qualitative in nature and employed descriptive research design. These methods helped the researchers to understand the experiences and perceptions of migrants on sustainable livelihood and quality of life. The study used a snowball sampling technique, and individual interviews were used to gather information from study participants. Interviewing technique (face-to-face individual interviews) was used within the context of descriptive design. The paper revealed that migrants' entrepreneurial skills play vital role and contributed immensely to the country's economy and improved the quality of life and sustainable livelihoods of migrants. The study revealed that some migrants' small businesses were established through the support and network with their fellow countrymen. It was further found that these businesses generate income and uplift their livelihood through the flow of remittances to their home countries, they are experiencing robberies and other related crimes. Lastly, it also revealed that there is no link between the qualification and kind of business operated by the migrants. Findings from this study will form part of the policy briefs to relevant stakeholders and the funders (National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences – NIHSS). Southern Africa and South Africa is experiencing high volumes of migrants for various reasons. The study contributes into the body of knowledge by closing a gap on the link between the educational qualifications and economic profile that enhance sustainable livelihood of migrants.

**Keywords:** qualifications, entrepreneurship, migrants, quality of life, South Africa

### **INTRODUCTION**

The migration in South Africa has been exacerbated by the advent of the new democratic government in 1994. According to Crush and McDonald (2002) there are few significant disparities underlying the change towards more remarkable intra-regional migration. First, the end of apartheid, a system established to regulate migration and restrict foreigners, provision of new opportunities for internal and cross-border mobility. Secondly, the integration of South Africa into the SADC region has resulted in a substantial rise in legal and illegal cross-border movements and new migration modes. Thirdly, the region's reconnection with the world economy has opened to modes of migration generally identified with globalization.

Consequently, most of the people leave their country due to poverty, war, and unemployment, hoping to find jobs, an opportunity for education that will improve their lifestyles and families.

Godfrey, Chikanda, Crush and Tengeh, (2015) stated that research in South Africa has revealed that migrants, especially refugees, appear to encounter a lot of barriers in gaining access to formal employment leading many to find work in the informal economy. Additionally, there has been an increasing number of migrants in South Africa seeking a better life and a decent work opportunity. Some of the migrants were highly skilled with qualifications and some with no qualifications. Skilled migrants are described as people on the move who hold university degrees or comprehensive technical work experience as they leave their countries of origin to pursue jobs elsewhere (Crowley-Henry, O'Connor, & Al Ariss, 2016; Shirmohammadia, Beigib & Stewart, 2019). In South Africa, the unemployment rate has increased by 0,01 to a percentage point of 29,1 in 2019 (StatsSA.,2019). Therefore, these create a massive challenge for migrants to get jobs. The country has a high graduate unemployment rate of 31,0% in the 4th quarter of 2018 – an increase of 11,4 percentage points quarter-on-quarter (Stats SA, 2019).

Consequently, for most skilled migrants finding a job opportunity became a severe challenge, which prompted them to establish businesses such as salons and fashion designers that generate income, improve their quality of life, and sustain their livelihood. Essentially, the exclusion of the African immigrants had, among others, their qualifications devalued and thus lacked recognition (Moyo, Nicolau, & Gumbo, 2016). They also could not easily join the formal sector which made it difficult for migrant to acquire work permits, hence, if employed, suffered exploitation in formal jobs (Moyo, Nicolau & Gumbo, 2016). Most of the highly qualified teacher migrants, mainly from Zimbabwe, are unemployed, which resulted in establishing businesses such as private schools that generate income. In support of the above idea, Szarucki, Brzozowski, & Stankeviciene (2016) and Shirmohammadia, Beigib & Stewart (2019) argue that highly qualified migrants build businesses that match or surpass the economic success of their native counterparts in the mainstream of their new country's economy, while low-skilled migrants produce small, frequently insecure and less productive businesses.

Accordingly, in South Africa there are some of the highly skilled migrants with doctoral degree employed in the institutions of higher learning to share their skills with the students. Additionally, the low skilled migrants mostly, do door to door selling of broomstick, picnic basket, curtains, and laundry bean to enhance their living conditions. The idea of the migrant entrepreneur has played an important role in the social and economic growth of many developing and developed countries around the world (Asoba & Mefi, 2020). Their operations entail the sale of curiosities, the retailing of ethnic clothes and foods, the maintenance of motor vehicles, and hairdressing salons' operation. The running of pubs, nightclubs, bars, music stores, many import-export companies, and traditional healing methods are other operations. These are most of the businesses that the migrants engage in to ensure that they survive and support their families. In this paper, small business and entrepreneurship can be used interchangeable.

Furthermore, there is also a migrant's mismatch of qualifications and skills in the country of destination. In very general terms, skills (or qualifications) mismatch is constructed by comparing the skills or qualifications of a working person with the skills or qualifications specific requirements of the job (Pellizari & Fichen, 2017). McDonald and Valenzuela (2017) share similar sentiments and states that skills mismatch happens where a job holder has a higher level of ability or qualification than the job requirements. Therefore, mismatch among

immigrants has been found to reduce wages, resulting in significant mutilating of the labour market and disrupting one's economic integration in the host country. The mismatch of skills exacerbated the mushrooming of the migrant establishment of businesses searching for a better life and alleviating poverty. One other important variable is the over-supply of skills in the labour market, which leads to the entrepreneurial establishment that increased the flow of remittances. In order to mitigate hunger and unemployment amongst themselves, most of the low skilled migrants are involved in hard labour such as painting and building a house. The paper aims to identify the qualifications and economic profile of the migrants in relation to entrepreneurial skills that enhance the quality of life and sustainable livelihood of the migrants.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The number of unemployed graduates is increasing nationally and globally, exacerbated by the economic challenges in developed and developing countries. As a result of the shortages of employment, many people migrate from their country of origin to their destination, searching for a better life. The empirical evidence established that people who migrate are on average better educated than non-migrants in the source country as well as in the receiving country, resulting in a brain drain in their country of origin and possibly a brain waste in the latter country (Handler, 2018). However, it does not necessarily mean the low-skilled are not migrating to other countries searching for a better future. These migrants, both educated and unskilled, mostly struggle to be employed and apply various ways to ensure the sustenance of their life by establishing businesses. In support of the above a study conducted by Christopher, Mulungu, Helena, and Myeya (2018) in Tanzania, revealed that migrants with different educational background found in Mbodzi district use various strategies such as identified crop farming, out-migration, petty trade, livestock keeping, casual labour, sales of the local brew, carpentry, masonry, brick making, grain milling and house renting to survive and to improve their quality of life and sustain their livelihoods. Apart from that, South Africa also has a high number of migrants from neighbouring countries in Africa. For the reason of the high unemployment rate in South Africa, as mentioned above, migrants engaged themselves in entrepreneurship to sustain their livelihood and enhance the quality of life. In this context, though, it should also be remembered that there is a most significant connection between educational qualifications and the kind of entrepreneurial abilities that migrants possess.

The ecosystem theory emphasizes the interaction of migrants with the environment; along with that, this theory influences the migrants to develop intervention strategies such as the establishment of small businesses to address challenges like poverty and unemployment encountered in the destination country during the interaction with the environment. In that, entrepreneurship has the capacity to expand the economic growth that is significant to the process of economic development (Ortmeyer & Quinn, 2020). Entrepreneurship is a process rooted in dreams and ideas developed over time as a productive factor that brings together advanced natural, labour and capital factors and drives production (Khemesh,2019). Most of the migrants alternatively apply their entrepreneurial skills to establish a small business that survives, under the conditions of risks and uncertainties for making profit. The entrepreneurship plays an important role in enhancing the living conditions of the migrants' population. Most of the migrants escape poverty by creating and establishing a small business in South Africa. The entrepreneurship requires having good, long-term partnerships with both the consumer and the bureaucracy, and getting these relationships has enormous benefits in the

development of new business strategies and the resolution of problems (Khemesh, 2019). In that vein, the migrants' financial achievement contributes to economic growth through the flow of remittance. In another study conducted by Ratha (2017), remittance positively affects an economy's development by increasing foreign savings, paying off external debt services, and using remittance as a cushion against capital flight. Scholars expand the views and states that, the remittances sent by the migrants are used for various reasons for instance, the repayment of loans, the purchase of land, food and clothing, home construction and savings (Barkat & Ahsan, 2014 and Hossain, Chin, Said & Ishak, 2020). Migrant remittances, for example, are estimated at about US\$550 billion annually and contribute greatly to reducing poverty in certain countries (Adams and Page, 2005; World Bank, 2013; Naudé, Siegel, & Marchand, 2017). However, in the SADC region countries such as Zimbabwe, Mugumisi and Ndhlovu (2013) and Bonga (2020) assert that remittances have positive micro economic and social impact on households and the community at large. The remittance is the most important source of income for many households in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean migrants with the income generated from the small businesses purchase goods and send them home. In a study conducted in Mozambique, revealed that rural people rely largely on remittances and migrant remittances are often better off than non-migrant ones (De Vletter, 2007; Mlambo & Kapingura, 2020). This then is supported by the migration system theory emphasizes that migrants, through their small business and flow of remittance, contribute immensely to the country of origin and destination's economic, social, cultural, and institutional conditions.

A small enterprise may be defined as a single, separate organization, including cooperative enterprises and non-governmental organizations, operated by one or more members, including branches or subsidiaries, whether one is primarily carrying out in any of the sectors or subsectors of the economy referred to in the size standards schedule (National Small Business Act of 1996). The small businesses are mostly the means of survival for the migrants. However, in this context, the study aims to identify the educational qualifications of the migrants and the economic profile of the migrants in relation to entrepreneurial skills that enhance the quality of life. The ecosystem theory, migration theory, and network theory in this study are used as a theoretical lens to analyse the findings.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was qualitative in nature and descriptive research was used. The qualitative approach helped the researchers to discover salient matters that migrants use for their life survival and could make second order interpretations. In that Tracy (2019) claim that second order interpretation means that researchers construct explanations for the migrant's explanations. This approach was used to ensure and enabled researchers to gain first-hand experience from the migrants participating in the study (Creswell, 2003). Descriptive research design was adopted to identify and describe the population with its characteristics and in this context, educational qualifications of the migrants and entrepreneurial skills that enhance the quality of life and sustain a migrant livelihood. The descriptive research design aimed at describing mitigating factors that seek to enhance the quality of life and sustain the migrant livelihood. This design focuses on "how" and "who" questions and enabled the researchers to provide a detailed, highly accurate picture of the background and context of the participants' situation (Neuman, 2000).

The population under study are the migrant populations involved in small business to improve their quality of life. Population refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics (Strydom, 2011). In this study the population was sampled using a non-probability sampling particularly snowball sampling. Sampling refers to the process of selecting migrant participants that was involved in the study (Whittaker, 2012). With snowball sampling the researchers begin by identifying numerous participants who fit the study's criteria and then ask these people to suggest a colleague, a friend, or a family member (Tracy, 2019). Subsequently, the researchers in this study started with migrants known to the researchers and later referred to the other migrants. In this study data were collected using an individual interview technique. The one-on-one individual interviews are a useful way of getting a large amount of information quickly and are an effective way of obtaining depth in data (Greef, 2011). The six (6) male and female participants were interviewed on different dates and times to uncover information on entrepreneurial skills that seek to improve their quality of life and sustain their livelihood. The qualitative data were analysed thematically with the assistance of the Nvivo software programme.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

It was important in this study to identify the educational qualifications of the migrants to understand the entrepreneurial skills migrants possess. According to Christopher, Mulungu, Helena, and Myeya (2018) aver that education influences the future shape and direction of migrants in the area of destination. Therefore, the participants in this study provide a detailed report on how their education is linked to the kind of business established for their survival.

### Educational Qualifications and Economic Profile of The Migrants

The participants were from various countries in Africa, such as Ghana, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Somalia, and Ethiopia and with different educational qualification and without qualifications as indicated below:

Table 1: Educational Qualifications and Economic Profile of The Migrants

Participants no.	Qualification and skills	Migrant's small business	Nationality
1.	Fashion designer	Design clothes	Ghana
2.	Matric	Selling cell phones porch/kits	Pakistan
3.	Teacher	Salon	Zimbabwe
4.	Building certificate	Selling used tyres on the road	Zimbabwe
5.	No-qualification	Supermarket	Somalia
6.	Matric	Supermarket	Ethiopia

The above table shows the migrant's country of origin, qualifications and with those with no qualifications as well as the kind of business that are operated by migrants in the selected provinces of South Africa. Below the study participants narrate the establishment of their businesses.

## **Establishment of The Business and Number of Employees**

Most migrants established their small businesses through the network with their friends but after a severe struggle in the country of destination. The migration networks can be defined as sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey, 1988; Bonga, 2020). Therefore, migrant networks become more established, and migration becomes persistent migration with time (Bonga, 2020). The network makes the migrants to navigate pathways for survival irrespective of how they arrived in the country of destination. The participants had to say the following on the establishment of their businesses:

*“I started by working with my friend in his business from 2015 to 2017. With the money I accumulated and saved, I started my own business that deals with fashion design and hair salons, and barbershop, fortunately, I have qualifications in fashion design. In my business, I employed 4 people, and three are responsible for a salon and barbershop whereas one is working with me to design clothes” (Participant 1)*

The participants 5, with no qualification and participant 6, with matric certificate indicated that prior to the establishment of their own business, they had to work for a fellow countryman without wages to learn about business. These participants stated that they worked for two years without any payment, which was an agreement with the shop owner to get their share and start their supermarkets after a particular period. And that each supermarket employed at least two people. While participants 2 with matric and participant 3 with diploma in education received tutelage while working under someone with payment, whereas saving money to start their own business.

*“Started by working as a builder because I have a certificate in building houses. After realizing that building houses is a heavy kind of work, I saved enough money to start a business of selling used tyres along the road.” (Participant 4)*

It has been deduced in this study through the network theory that the connection and relationships that migrants have amongst themselves played a significant role in the establishment of the business. It is through social networks that migrants learn about opportunities and conditions in potential destinations; at home, the structure of migrants’ social networks shape their ability and desire to leave (Blumenstock, Chi & Tan, 2019). The support and proper network lead to the development of trust amongst themselves. In support of that Eresia-Eke and Okerue (2018) states that business skills training can be informal and easily be accessed through business support, networking and this helps migrants to cope with running their established business.

The ecosystem theory, therefore, showed that without proper connections, bonds, and support from fellow migrants with existing businesses, the establishment of businesses appears to be complicated. The study also revealed that migrant small business has employed people. This study share similar findings with study done by Dzomonda (2020) which revealed that small businesses mostly employs people from the local community and thus far the numbers of beneficiaries has increased. Despite that, even though some migrants had qualifications, the study shows that there is no link between the kind of business operated by the migrants and their qualifications except one migrant who operated the business with the acquired

entrepreneurial skills. Below the participants provide a blueprint of how much their business generates to improve the quality of life.

### **Estimated Income Generated by The Business**

The business that generates more income are likely to create employment that assists in sustaining and improving the quality of life. The study conducted in US which is consistent with this study revealed that migrants appear to create jobs more than they take jobs in the U.S. economy (Azoulay, Jones, Kim, & Miranda, 2020). Therefore, the participants substantiated as follows;

*“the estimated income generated per month is between R16 000 -R20 000, which, in my opinion, is not enough such that I can say I enjoy and have a quality life, but besides that, with the little I get, I survive.”* (Participant 1)

For the participants 5 and 6 with supermarkets, the estimated amount generated per month was between R45 000-R60 000 and could pay employed people. In contrast, participants 2& 3 indicated that the business generates between R2 000-R6 000 per month, helping them to pay rent and buy food.

*“the business generates an income between R2 500 and R3 500, which is not enough to support my family. I have a wife and three kids.”* (Participant 4)

The study shows that the participant 2 was selling cell phone protective kits, which was not generating enough income. Despite that the ecosystem theory, therefore concluded that interdependence and support from relevant systems, which are migrants who already have businesses, the fellow migrants earn income that changes and improves their life and sustains themselves. This study reveals that there is no connection between the qualifications of the migrants and the kind of business income generated for the survival of the migrants. Most migrants in this study make additional money unrelatedly of their educational level except one participant who design fashion clothes.

### **Flow of Remittances**

When migrants generate income in their businesses, they purchase goods and send them to their home country. Faini (2007), McDonald and Valenzuela (2017) used national-level statistics to illustrate that skilled migrants are less likely than their low-skilled counterparts to remit more to their home economies and concludes that skilled migration is unlikely to improve the flow of remittances to the source country. However, the findings in this study showed that supermarkets owners are likely to send more money to their country of origin than the business that is making limited income. The participants had to say the following;

*“I sometimes transfer money home in support of my siblings, but I have my wife and two kids here in South Africa. Sometimes I send home an amount of R2 000.”* (Participant 1)

Participants 3 and 4 indicated that they buy goods such as bed, wardrobe, electrical appliances, and send money home to build houses.

*“I even use my open bakkie to transport goods for myself and other people, and as a supplement to what I make in my business.” (Participant 4)*

Participant 5 and 6 indicated that the money transferred home monthly is between R10 000 -R25 000. While participant 2 showed that sending money home is still a problem because the business does not generate enough to sustain his life. What is drawn from the above findings is that the migrants’ businesses can assist their sibling in their country of origin with goods and money. It is also found that migrants prefer informal remittances where the money is given to somebody else they trust. According to Nyasha and Odhiambo (2019), informal channels usually involve sending money with relatives going home or with a bus driver when remittance sending and receiving countries are bordering each other. In this study the informal remittance is preferred by migrants from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe. Most people who migrate in search for better job and life are highly appreciated by their family in the country of origin to bring money home to support siblings. In that regard, the study conducted by Hossain, Chin, Said, and Ishak, (2020) proposes that the country of destination should formulate policies and procedures for the proper use of remittances as well as the manpower exporting policies. In a nutshell policies and procedures development will help in controlling the remit and guarantee the contribution to the economy. In this study, the findings reveal that the educational qualifications of the migrant have no acquaintances to the flow of remittance. In other words, most of the migrants irrespective of their educational level can decide whether to remit or to enjoy the fruits of their labour which is the money generated in the business to sustain their livelihood.

### **Challenges Encountered in their Small Business**

A pervasive and entrenched concern in South Africa is the high level of criminality, which affects the success of small business (Seda, 2016). Many migrant business owners mostly spend their money on ensuring adequate security in their places of trade. In this case, crime is committed by both the migrants and non-migrants. Considering the above, participants showed concern about the criminal activities taking place in their businesses, mainly supermarkets. Participant 5 &6 indicated that people in South Africa are very jealousy about their business. The most challenging issue is robbery at gunpoint, which occur annually in their supermarkets and police are unfortunately doing little about it when these incidents are reported to them. This makes them to suspect that police are involved in criminal activities.

*“Every business has ups and downs in terms of generating income per month. Nevertheless, this year, due to the covid-19 pandemic, I had the challenge to make payment of the rent where I run my business and to make payment of rent where I stay even to pay for my kids’ school fees when we were in lockdown level 2; the business was going very slow.” (Participant 1)*

Another one said:

*“people take time to buy cell phone protective kit which, in my opinion, is a serious challenge, but I am thinking of adding another business.” (Participant 2)*

Participants 3&4 had similar answers and indicate that sometimes there are no clients and few clients come to their salon and that limited customers buy tyres. Both participants



indicated that they want to add another business to help generate income to sustain and live the life they aspired. One other issue raised by participant 3 with diploma in education is that getting a migrant work permit in South Africa is a grave challenge. In this study the findings reveal that all participants are encountering serious challenges that affect the operation and success of the businesses. This study shares similar findings with the study done by Fatoki (2020), that revealed that migrants owned small businesses, just like those that are owned by natives, face various challenges that impact negatively on their performance and income.

## **DISCUSSION**

International migration has been inevitable since previous centuries. South Africa, like any other developing and developed country in the globe, has been receiving migrants. They left their countries for various reasons such as poverty, unemployment, apartheid, and economic and political instabilities. The South African government received skilled migrants with qualifications and low skilled migrants without qualifications from neighbouring states such as Zimbabwe, Somalia, Pakistan, Ghana and Ethiopia, seeking better job opportunities. Due to the high unemployment rate in South Africa, these migrants with their qualification opted for small business that improves living conditions and lifestyles. In this study, the Network theory contributed mainly to the life of migrants. The ecosystem theory also played a significant role in helping the migrants understand the environment in which their businesses operate and enhanced their interaction with customers as their businesses are operative. The discussion sequence is done in terms of the themes that emerged, which is the establishment of the small business, income generated in the business, the flow of remittances, and challenges encountered by business owners. As a point of departure, the researchers found that network and support played a significant role in assisting the migrant in starting a small business. All participants in this study worked under a particular person and saved money to establish a small business. The study further revealed that there is no connection between their educational qualifications and the kind of businesses that are operated by the migrants except one participant.

Furthermore, the business at least generated income that made migrant life much more comfortable. Some of the participants in each business could employ at least two people, can send money and goods at home. It was found that there were informal remittances and formal remittances involved in the study. The informal remittance was practiced by migrants from neighbouring countries, particularly Zimbabweans. In contrast, those with supermarkets remit through foreign exchange, which benefits the destination country's economy. Additionally, the researchers found that migrants' businesses are faced with challenges of criminal activities. One participant indicated that getting a work permit in South Africa is a grave challenge. The above findings then suggest that small businesses make their life much better.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper aims to identify the qualifications and economic profile of the migrants in relation to entrepreneurial skills. The researchers outlined how migrants established their businesses and the kind of business, the income generated every month in the business, the flow of remittance, and business challenges. It was then concluded that entrepreneurship played an

indispensable role in economic growth and improved life and sustain their livelihood. However, their educational qualifications had no influences in the kind of business migrants established. Above all, the support, network, and relationship migrants established with each other contributed immensely to their quality of life and sustainable livelihood.

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## **LIMITATIONS**

The current study collected data from the limited number of participants due to Covid-19 pandemic.

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