Africa's Diasporas and the Challenge of Employment Opportunities: Experiences of Exiled Zimbabwe Nationals Based in the United Kingdom.

Prof Rodreck Mupedziswa (PhD). Professor of Social Work, University of Botswana

Abstract

Two hotly contested events that occurred in Zimbabwe in 2000 – launch of a controversial land reform programme, and a disputed presidential election – triggered a mass exodus of Zimbabwean nationals into the Diasporas. The destinations of choice included the southern African countries of South Africa and Botswana, as well as far-flung countries such as Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (UK). An estimated 3.5 million Zimbabweans reportedly fled the country mostly between 2000 and 2003 and apparently nearly one million of them settled in the United Kingdom. Incontrovertibly, the mass exodus caused a massive brain drain; by some accounts, up to 60 per cent of the country's professionals – engineers, accountants, lawyers and doctors left the country at the time. This paper draws on the findings of a study conducted in the United Kingdom by the present author during the period 2005 and 2006. Some 250 exiled Zimbabwean migrants across the United Kingdom, participated in the study which sought to document their lives and times in exile, including their experiences in regard to employment prospects and opportunities. The study, inter alia, found out that many of the Zimbabwean migrants faced numerous challenges on the employment front. Many of the respondents confessed that they had, upon arrival in the UK, realised rather belatedly, in respect of that developed country that, 'All the glitters (UK) is not gold'.

Introduction

Migration involves movement from one geographical point to another, and this can be for any number of reasons, which may range from economic, through social to political. The phenomenon of migration is often characterised as a natural reaction usually to cope with adverse conditions. According to Grondin (2004), one out of every 35 persons worldwide is an international migrant, suggesting that migration is indeed a phenomenon of mammoth proportions in today's world. Migration can be voluntary or forced. Those who migrate for economic reasons often do so essentially to look for greener pastures, while those who migrate for social reasons may do so to join family members or to get married, etc. (Mupedziswa, 1993). As for those migrating for political reasons, these triggers may relate to encounters with traumatic events, including war, human rights violations and violence. Thus in the political realm, people may be forced to unceremoniously migrate for fear of

persecution. Upon arrival in the country of destination, some migrants will regularise their stay through acquiring relevant documents, while others may, for various reasons, remain undocumented. In many such cases, the circumstances are such that it becomes difficult for forced migrants to regularise their stay, resulting in them remaining undocumented even if they would have preferred otherwise.

In the context of Zimbabwe, two hotly contested events that occurred in the country in 2000 – launch of a controversial land reform programme, and a disputed presidential election – triggered a mass exodus of Zimbabwean nationals into the Diasporas. The destinations of choice included South Africa, the United Kingdom, Botswana, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand. An estimated 3.5 million Zimbabweans reportedly fled the country between 2000 and 2003 alone (Zimbabwe Independent, 2004; Donnelly, 2004). Of this figure, apparently, close to a million settled in the United Kingdom alone (Donnelly, 2004). While admittedly, scores of migrants had also left the country before this period, the vast majority are known to have fled the country during the stated (volatile) period (2000 – 2003). The unprecedented movement of Zimbabwean nationals out of the country during that time constituted a massive brain drain for the country, which happening of course had serious consequences for the country's socioeconomic development.

By some accounts, over 70% of all Zimbabwean university graduates were working outside the country by the end of 2003 (Hill, 2004). Other commentators suggested that about 60% of the country's trained professionals - engineers, accountants, lawyers and doctors - had left the country during the said period (Sparks, 2003a). Other accounts suggest that nearly 25% of those that left the country at the time had been in Zimbabwe's health sector, and these included medical doctors, nurses and pharmacists (Chetsanga & Muchenje, 2003). This contention was corroborated by Marongwe (2004:4) who observed that, "*Since the start of the economic and political crisis in the country in 1997, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, radiographers, lecturers, social workers, lawyers, mechanics, technicians, artisans, have left in droves*". Indeed the professionals did leave the country in very large numbers. For instance, one medical doctor based in Scotland revealed that several of her former classmates in medical school in Zimbabwe had moved to the UK (Mupedziswa, 2009a;b) Similarly, a social work practitioner based in England revealed that not less than six former classmates (at the School of Social Work in Zimbabwe) who had moved to the UK, were (at the time) working in the same office, employed by a British local authority. (Mupedziswa & Ushamba,

2006). Thus, incredibly large numbers of professionals had left the country. Most of these of professionals of course would have been trained at great cost to the country (Mupedziswa & Mushunje 2012; Mupedziswa, 2009a; Mupedziswa & Ushamba 2006).

Incontrovertibly, the brain drain turned out to be massive and unprecedented (Mupedziswa & Ushamba 2006). However, while some commentators saw this mass exodus as a curse given that, in their view, the concomitant brain drain had inevitably contributed to the hemorrhaging of the Zimbabwean economy, others, on the contrary, argued that, in fact, this development ought to be viewed as a boon (Tevera & Crush, 2003), given that, apart from the remittances that would flow into the country, this 'windfall' would actually help reduce the country's high unemployment rate which was hovering at over 80% (Mupedziswa & Mushunje, 2012). Those who subscribed to the latter argument went on to observe that, with many firms closing and others operating at half capacity, Zimbabwe actually ought to be grateful for this (migration) 'safety valve' and should thus actually be encouraging many more of its nationals to emigrate. Whatever their reasons for migrating, large numbers of Zimbabwe nationals (often unceremoniously) did leave the country during this period, and as noted earlier, thousands of them found their way into the UK. The paper documents the experiences of these exiled Zimbabwe nationals who fled to the UK, in regard to issues pertaining to employment opportunities in the destination country.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Study Site and Population

As noted, estimates of the number of Zimbabwean nationals who fled to the United Kingdom have varied greatly but the figure of close to a million persons appears to have attained broad consensus (Donnelly, 2004). Of this figure, 250 persons participated in the study through responding to an interview schedule/questionnaire. Within this sample 7 respondents were white, while the rest (243) were black Zimbabweans. Participants to the study were drawn from all four 'states' which make up the UK, namely, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The respondents were drawn from many different cities, towns and villages, including London, Cambridge, Liverpool, Manchester, Eastbourne, Coventry, Leeds and Oxford in England; Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow and Inverness in Scotland; Swansea, Cardiff and Brecon Beacons in Wales, and Belfast and Londonderry in Northern Ireland. The

vast majority of the respondents though were drawn from England, and London in particular, partly because the region had the greatest concentration of the migrants, but also for logistical reasons.

2.2. *Sampling Methods*

All four "states" that constitute the UK were included in the sample. In the majority of instances, snowball and availability sampling techniques were utilized. Using these techniques, respondents were identified through a variety of channels, including via professional, religious and social clubs and other related social and professional connections. The research team, *inter alia,* took advantage of scores of former University of Zimbabwe graduates who happened to be based in various parts of the UK, and these assisted in connecting the research team members with exiled Zimbabwean nationals across the length and breadth of that country. Only candidates who claimed to have fled the country to seek asylum in the UK were included in the study sample.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected essentially through the use of a self-administered questionnaire/interview schedule. Five key informants also participated in the study through the use of an interview guide. These were drawn from academic (2 university professors) local administration (2 senior council officials) and entrepreneurial rank (landlord). Additional information was obtained through informal discussions and observation by the principal researcher and his team. Existing records too, as well as newspaper articles were consulted. In a few cases, the questionnaire was administered via the phone. Phone interviews, as a technique, worked remarkably well in the UK because the charges for the facility turned out to be quite reasonable particularly during off-peak hours. In the majority of cases appointments for face-to-face encounters with respondents were arranged, as the team moved from one region of the country to the other. In a few instances, questionnaires were dispatched either via the postal service facility (first class mail) or by electronic-mail.

2.4 Conduct of Field Work

Fieldwork for the study was conducted over a period of two months (May and June 2005). The Principal researcher and the Associate researcher worked with four Research assistants, who were already based in the UK. Between them, the Principal and Associate researchers conducted the lion's share of the data gathering exercise. The Research assistants underwent a half-day training session conducted at a venue in Bracknell, Berkshire, England in April 2005. The data collection tool was pre-tested before it was released for use during fieldwork. Once fieldwork had commenced, regular de-briefing sessions were conducted with Research assistants over the two months period of data gathering. The questionnaires were coded partly to protect the integrity of participants, but also to avoid interviewing the same individuals more than once.

2.5 Limitations of Study

A key limitation of the study related to the fact that the sample was rather small for the kind of study that was envisaged. Respondents were largely concentrated in England, and London in particular, partly for logistical reasons, and hence the study sample could have been a bit skewed. The fact that the study happened at a time when the socio-political and economic environment in Zimbabwe was particularly poisoned and thus volatile, meant that some respondents might have failed to give honest responses due to suspicion. Use of snowball and availability sampling techniques also had its limitations; it is possible that exiled Zimbabwean nationals based in certain parts of the United Kingdom were not represented, and this might have affected the quality of the data to some extent. The research team was however, confident that the research process adhered to acceptable scientific standards, rendering the results credible.

3, Research Findings

3.1 *Demographic Profiles*

The demographic profiles of the respondents, *inter alia*, were considered based on such variables as gender, age group, marital status, education levels, family size, employment, type of social networks, among other factors. The details are presented in the next few paragraphs.

- **Place/Area of residence**

As Table 1 shows, the vast majority of the respondents in the study (81%) were drawn from England, with London claiming the lion's share of the sample, followed by the cities of Cambridge and Birmingham. As for Scotland (6.80%), most respondents were drawn from Edinburgh, while in Northern Ireland (3.6%) respondents were drawn mainly from the cities of Belfast and Londonderry As for Wales (2.4%), respondents were mainly drawn from Cardiff and Swansea. Types of residence of respondents varied, with a few of them indicating they lived in private or council lease houses; others indicating they lived in private apartments, while a few others (6%) did not indicate their type of dwelling. It is possible that among those who indicated 'other' included those who confirmed they moved from one relative's place to another, since their circumstances were such that they could not afford to rent shelter on their own, and hence were of no fixed abode.

Table 1: Area of residence in the UK

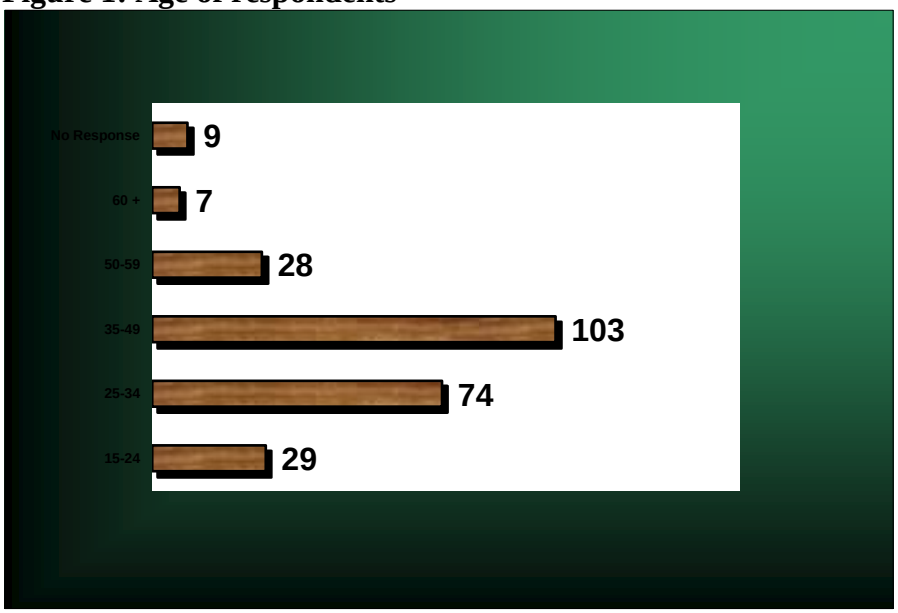
Area	**Frequency**	**%**
England	203	81. 20
Scotland	17	6. 80
Northern Ireland	9	3.60
Wales	6	2. 40
Other	15	6. 00
Total	**250**	**100.00**

N = 250; Missing cases=15.

- **Gender and Age**

Of the sample of 250 respondents, 136 were female while the remainder were male. In terms of age, Figure 1 below shows that the largest cluster of the respondents (103) were in the 35 – 49 age group while the smallest number was found in the age group 60 years and above. This may suggest that those in the economically active categories constituted the population cohort which left Zimbabwe for the United Kingdom in larger numbers than the other groups. The youngest respondent in the study sample was a female who was aged 18, while the oldest respondent was a 77 year old male. A total of 41 respondents did not respond to this question for one reason or another. The mean age of the respondents was 37 years, while the mode age was 38 years which may again suggest that Zimbabwe lost to other countries, energetic, economically active and relatively young adults who were still in the prime of their lives.

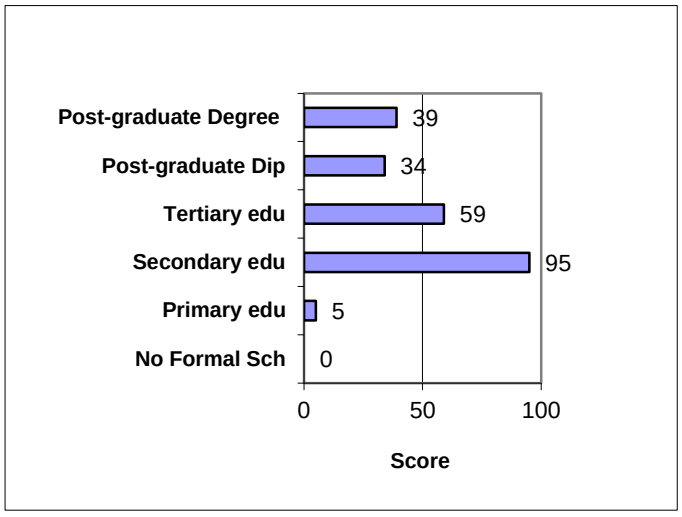
Figure 1: Age of respondents



- **Education level**

Of the 232 respondents who answered the question on education levels a relatively large number (57%) had attained tertiary education (first degree), or better (post graduate qualification) in one field or another. A total of 41% of the respondents had completed secondary education, while 5 respondents had attained primary level education. None of the respondents reported not having had an education at all. Thus, if the results of the study are

Figure 2: Education level of respondents



anything to go by, all the migrants who fled to the UK had some kind of education. This makes sense because it would probably be very difficult to travel all the way and seek asylum in a country like the UK without at least basic education to enable one to get by. In Africa

most illiterate and semi-literate asylum seekers tend to flee into neighbouring countries, and, with few exceptions, hardly ever flee beyond the borders of the African continent.

- **Marital status**

As shown in Table 2, a total of 129 respondents stated that they were married and living with their spouses in the UK; 14 were married but living apart from their spouses, while 41 indicated that they were single. It also emerged that 27 respondents were living with a partner outside marriage. Apparently, it was mostly the singles who ended up staying with a 'live-in' partner, something that culturally is frowned upon back in Zimbabwe. Two individuals confessed that although they had been married back home, they had 're-married' in the UK, purportedly for convenience, in an effort to have their immigration papers regularized. Efforts to establish the nature and type of marriage license, if any, they had held in respect of their previous marriage, were fruitless. Under Zimbabwean law, such individuals would be guilty of bigamy, if they held a 'conventional in-community of property' marriage license from their previous marriage, and got (officially) married again without annulling the previous marriage. The two respondents in this category were black Zimbabwean women who got 'married' to white men of British stock. The two women both stated that (following their marriage to British citizens) their residence permits had since been regularized, and they both unequivocally stated that they had no intention of ever returning to Zimbabwe again (despite having children and first husbands back home in Zimbabwe).

Table 2: Marital status of respondents:

Status	**Frequency**	**%**
Married (and living together)	129	57.07
Single (Never married)	41	18.14
Living with partner	27	11.95
Married (but temporarily living apart)	14	6.19
Separated	8	3.54
Widowed	7	3.10
Total	**226**	**100**

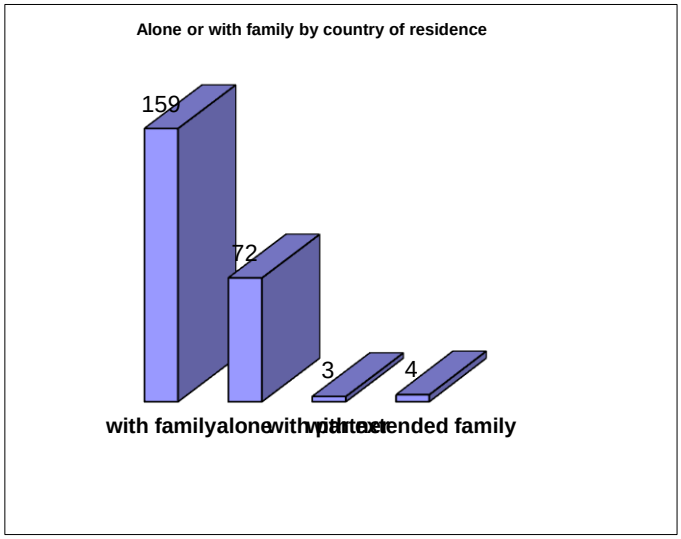
N:= 250; Missing cases = 24.

- **Family composition in UK**

Respondents were asked whether they were in the UK alone or with family. As Figure 3 indicates, of the 238 persons who responded to this question, 159 of them were with at least

one member of the nuclear family; 72 were alone, while the remainder were either with a live-in partner or with at least one member of the extended family. Many of those who had later arranged for their family members (spouse/children) to join them in the UK from Zimbabwe, apparently did so before the British government tightened entry requirements into that country, by introducing a visa requirement. Once the visa requirement had been introduced, it became extremely difficult for exiled Zimbabwean migrants to bring their family members into the UK. Many of the exiles were caught unaware by this piece of legislation, and as a result at the time of the study, their family members were still stuck in Zimbabwe, a development which caused much anguish, consternation and pain among most of the separated families. The fact that 72 of the respondents were in the UK alone, suggested that a fairly large number of families had been torn apart as a result of the unprecedented migration, occasioned in large measure, by the difficult sociopolitical and economic environment obtaining in Zimbabwe.

Figure 3: Migrant family composition in UK

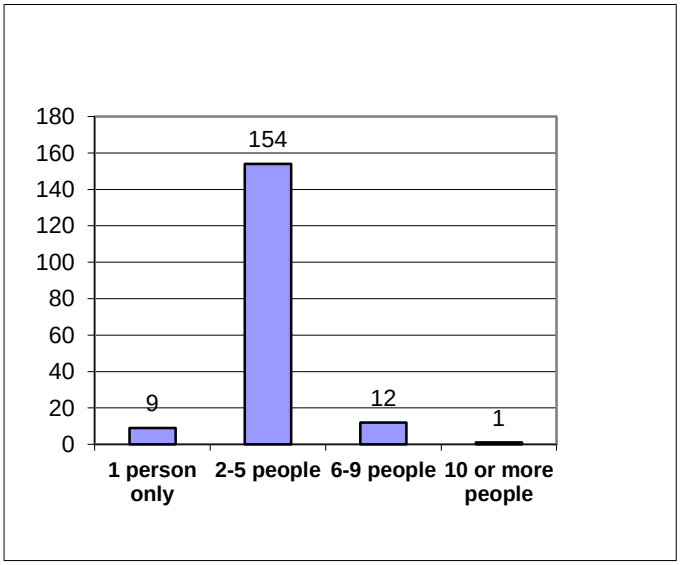


- **Household size**

The study sought to establish the number of persons making the household of each respondent, including amongst those who reported to being in the UK without members of their own family. The idea was to determine the extent to which respondents felt obliged to create a 'household' (family) atmosphere away from home essentially for purposes of social support.

Out of the 176 respondents who answered this question, 87, 5% indicated that they belonged to households of 2-5 persons. In a number of cases (12) very large numbers of people (6-9 persons), constituted a household in which the respondent was currently a member. In one instance, the respondent was residing in an extremely large household made up of more than 10 persons. It emerged that individuals who made their way into the UK (new arrivals) often made a point of identifying and then approaching friends and relatives ('home-boys') who were already in the UK with a view to requesting them for temporary shelter, while they frantically tried to secure accommodation of their own in the foreign land.

Figure 4: Number of persons per household

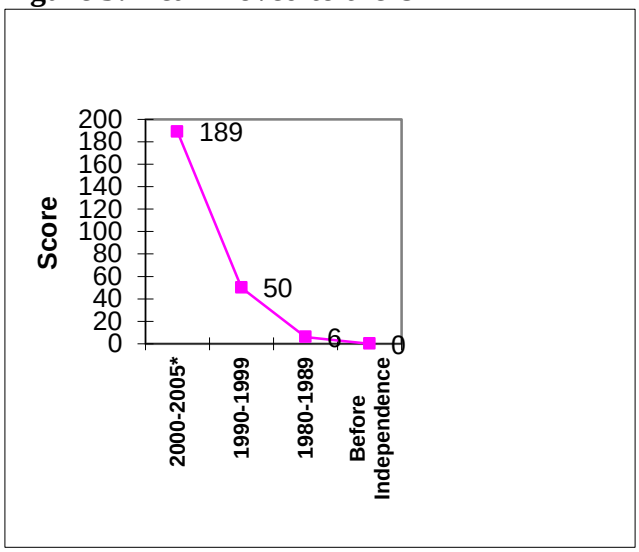


- **Length of stay in UK**

Figure 5 shows that 189 (77%) of respondents who responded to this question had migrated to the UK during the period 2000-2005. The tumultuous period that began in 2000 in particular was characterized by unprecedented political violence and a sharp decline of the economy, and it is therefore little wonder that large numbers of the respondents had left the country during that period. Needless to state that, the outflow of emigrants was particularly intense from mid-2000 until November 2002 when as alluded to above, the British government took the decision to introduce the visa requirement. Prior to that Zimbabwe passport holders could without hindrance, fly into the UK and obtain a visa at the point of entry.

The respondent who had been in the UK the longest arrived in that country in 1985 (and this was someone reportedly running away from political persecution in Matabeleland Province of Zimbabwe, while the one who had been in the country the shortest was only a couple of months old (2005) at the time of the interviews, and this was someone who claimed to have fled political persecution in Mashonaland Central Province. However, as noted earlier, the vast majority arrived between 2000 and 2005. Respondents' average length of stay in the UK was 5.80 years. This finding corroborates an observation by Tevera and Crush (2003) who found out that 43% of those they had interviewed in Zimbabwe indicated that they would prefer to stay in their emigration destination for longer than 5 years, suggesting they did not view emigration as temporary exile. Indeed many migrants from Zimbabwe viewed their move as either permanent or long term relocation. Such people would of course try to secure permanent jobs upon their arrival in the country of destination, in this case the UK.

Figure 5: Year moved to the UK



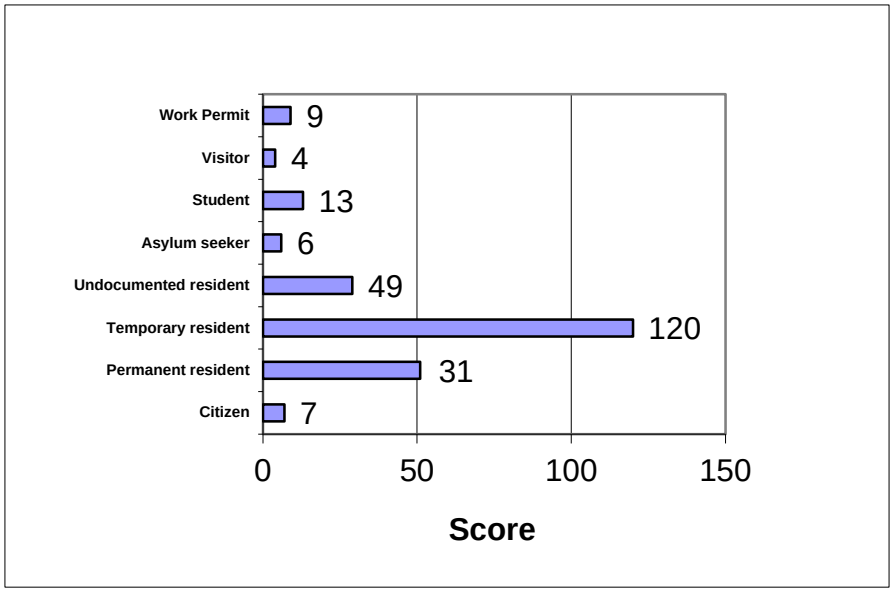
N= 245; Missing = 5

- **Residence status in UK**

The study sought to establish the residence status of the respondents, since this often tends to have implications for employment opportunities. As figure 6 indicates, the largest number of respondents (120) claimed to hold temporary residence status, while 7 claimed they held British citizenship. Of the 7 who made this claim, 5 were male, and 2 were female. Thirty-one (31) respondents had permanent residence status, while 9 said they were on a work permit, suggesting they too were temporary residents. Thirteen (13) respondents stated that

they were students, while 4 respondents reportedly held a visitors' permit. The UK normally offers six months duration visitors' visa and some migrants took advantage of this facility to work illegally in the country until the expiry of the visa period, at which stage they would consider either returning home or remaining in the UK but as an undocumented migrant.

Figure 6: Residence status in UK



N=250; Missing cases = 11

Forty-nine (20.5%) respondents reported that they had no proper documentation, while 11 respondents shied away from disclosing their residence status probably because they were undocumented, and presumably they were afraid of (potential) unsavory repercussions, such as victimization or even deportation. If the reason for non-disclosure of residence status is lack of proper documentation, then this might suggest that quite a considerable number of respondents (60 or 24% in all) had no proper documentation to enable them legally to remain in the United Kingdom. This made their situation untenable, as far as formal job hunting was concerned. It would appear nearly a quarter of the migrants had simply 'lost themselves in the crowd', as they could not secure proper immigration papers. This is probably one of the most profound, if significant findings of the current study. However, it must be stated that a number of the undocumented migrants indicated that they had launched their 'status' application papers with the relevant authorities in pursuit of political asylum. Of the 6 respondents who fell into the asylum seeker category, half were female. These respondents reported that they had fled political violence in Zimbabwe and were thus scared to go back.

4. Employment Experiences of Exiled Zimbabwean Migrants in the UK

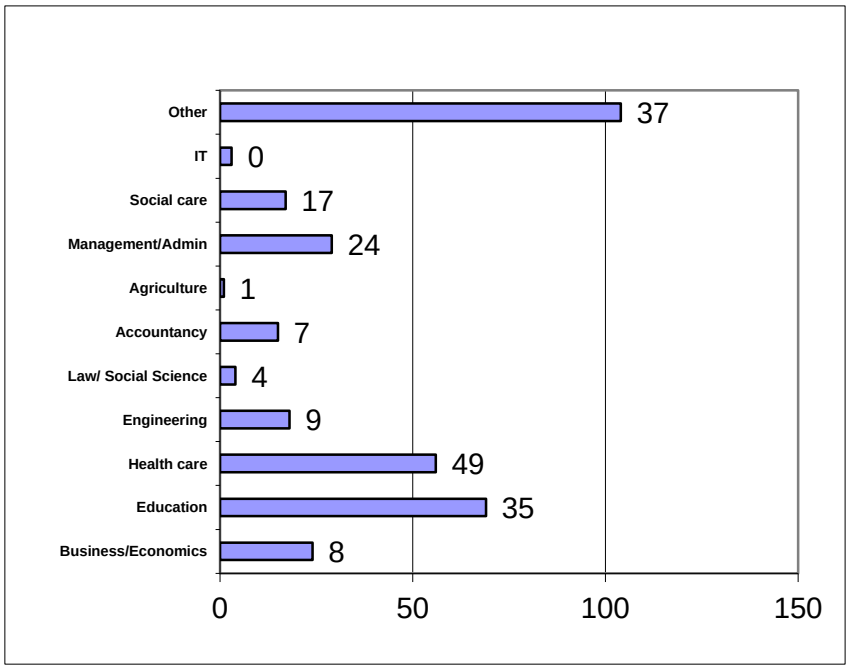
The paper was basically interested in documenting the employment experiences of the exiled Zimbabwean migrants in the United Kingdom. To gain a clearer and more lucid appreciation of the issue of employment opportunities of these migrants in the UK, the study began by asking questions around the employment status of each respondent when they were still in Zimbabwe, the skills they brought with them into the UK, and indeed their sectors of specialization. Following this, the focus then shifted to their job experiences since their arrival in the UK, including their in respect of job hunting and on-the-job experiences.

- **Skills brought from Zimbabwe**

Eighty per cent (80%) of the respondents indicated that they had held formal jobs which they had abandoned back home in Zimbabwe; a finding which to some extent contradicted the contention by Tevera and Crush (2003) for instance, who suggested that Zimbabwean nationals who went to look for work in the Diasporas had done so especially because they were unemployed at home and had few marketable skills in their own country. Chetsanga and Muchenje's (2003) study on the other hand established that only 54.5% of their respondents had left Zimbabwe for work related reasons. The'employment profiles' of the exiled Zimbabwean migrants in the UK who participated in the current study ranged from highly skilled to unskilled. Of those (186) who reportedly were skilled, their skill areas, as shown in Figure 7, were many and varied, and these included accountancy, business, education, engineering, healthcare, law and social care, among others. The largest number (49) had been operating in the health sector. Not all the skills were backed up by professional qualifications though, as some had acquired their skills on the job, without necessarily having academic qualifications to back them up.

A total of 186 respondents, however, indicated that they were in possession of professional qualifications, and of this figure, the vast majority (130) had received their professional training in Zimbabwe. Of the remainder, 39 had trained in South Africa, nine in South Africa and Zimbabwe, 5 in Zimbabwe and the UK, while the remaining few indicated that they had attained their professional qualifications in the UK, USA and Zambia. This perhaps serves to confirm the widely held notion that Zimbabwe had lost to the Diasporas, a considerable proportion of its skilled manpower – individuals who had been trained at great cost to the country.

Figure 7: Skill areas of respondents



- **Employment opportunities**

Upon arrival in the UK, 165 (66%) of the respondents had reportedly secured employment in the formal sector, while the remainder survived on ventures in the informal sector. A few individuals doubled in both the formal and the informal sectors. Needless to state that 26 of the respondents would not be drawn to indicate what they did for a living. This might suggest that at least some of these respondents were engaged in underhand dealings or in work that culturally tended to be frowned upon, such as escort and commercial sex work, or they were doing the kind of menial work they would not be comfortable to disclose. Many professionally qualified Zimbabwean nationals were engaged as causal workers (or general labourers) – what euphemistically, has come to be referred to as 'R and R', short for *rese rese* (vernacular for any job). These types of jobs have also been referred to as "*dot com*" jobs, or '*Henry*" jobs, with the latter term used to indicate that the particular individual used a hoover (cleaning machine) of the '*Henry*' trademark fame, to clean floors, for a living.

While a considerable number of the respondents in formal employment reported that they were applying their professional skills in the jobs they held in the UK, quite a fair number of them were not utilizing the skills in question as they had been forced by circumstances to settle for menial jobs. Sadly this created what could be termed a 'lose-lose' situation in the

sense that apart from Zimbabwe having lost these skilled people to the UK, neither the UK nor the individuals concerned were individually benefiting from their professional skills, as they were, instead, engaged in menial work.

It is incontrovertible that most of those that were not utilizing their professional skills in their (current) daily work, would eventually become 'blunt' or 'rusty' (from lack of practice), and thus would gradually begin to lose grasp of their professional skills (McGregor, 2007). This suggests the professional training received in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, might have been in vain. Several respondents however, indicated that they had voluntarily decided to shelve their professional qualifications and embark on a re-skilling exercise (i.e. learning new skills altogether) either because they had become rusty, or the work environment in the UK turned out to be rather different, and thus rendering their skills obsolete or redundant. In some cases skilling became necessary as the respondents realised that their area of expertise was oversubscribed. This confession was mostly made by those respondents who were in the technical sectors. This indeed was an unfortunate development given that, as noted earlier, the skills which they now sought to 'discard' had been acquired at tremendous cost to the developing country of Zimbabwe.

- **Sector of employment**

As Table 3 shows, of the 165 respondents who indicated that they were in a formal job (both professional and non-professional), 72% (119) were in the health sector, in specialised areas like medicine, nursing and laboratory technology, while quite a number were in care work. The sample of health personnel included 5 medical doctors, 46 state registered nurses (SRNs), 38 care workers, 21 social workers, 15 health assistants and 15 were health care assistants. Those employed in other sectors included bank tellers, engineers, lecturers, marketing executives and pharmacists. Predictably, the vast majority of those in the health sector were care workers. Suffice it to mention that several qualified nurses were also working as care workers, as they could not secure jobs commensurate with their qualifications. Some nurses however, took on care work in addition to their professional work. Thus, on the whole a large number of exiled Zimbabwe nationals in the sample were engaged in work that did not necessarily require use of their professional skills. For some, this was despite holding impressive professional qualifications.

Table 3: Sector of employment in the UK

Sector	Frequency
	UK %
Architecture	2
Agriculture	0
Business	37
Education	35
Engineering	11
Health	119
Law	1
Other	19
Total	**224 100.00**

N = 250; Missing = 26.

The sub-sample made up of those in the engineering field included an aircraft engineer, a chemical engineer, a telecommunications guru, a civil engineer and a food science specialist. One civil engineer was working in the education field, lecturing at a university, while another gave his designation as senior support engineer. A couple of them indicated that they had accepted a lower level (engineering field) jobs, not commensurate with their qualification, or the status and nature of responsibilities they had commanded back in Zimbabwe. They took up low level jobs because of limited opportunities available at upper levels in the entities in which they had sought employment.

Apart from an individual who had started a trucking (transport) business, and another one who was trading in "traditional African goods and services, including food items" many of those in the business sector included some that were engaged in informal or petty trade or low key activities such as buying and selling of goods. One individual had started a care worker supply entity, a couple of individuals operated conventional taxi services, one individual was a baker, while another operated a hair saloon. Two other respondents indicated that they were taxi drivers. One of the taxi drivers had been a trained minister of religion before fleeing to the UK. The one respondent who was in the field of law was an attorney, who, in his own words, had "established that the Roman Dutch law in which I specialized back home would not be very relevant in the UK".

Several respondents confessed to engaging in two or three jobs at a time, in an effort to augment their earnings, with a view to remitting some of the money to family members back

in Zimbabwe. With regard to those holding several jobs, one of the jobs would be official while the other two jobs would be unofficial. In one instance, the responded confessed to working seven days a week. The individual, who was staying with his spouse indicated that at times the husband and wife would not see each other for up to 5 days in a week because they both worked long and often odd hours, and consequently, they were often obliged to communicate through small hand-written written notes left on the pillow and through mobile phones. They had shelved the idea of trying to have a new baby just yet, as they realised that at the time, such a move would have further complicated their income-earning efforts.

Interestingly, not a single respondent reported working in the agricultural sector in the UK. When the key informants were asked why not, the explanation given was that there just were no opportunities open in that sector, and in their view, this was probably because agriculture in the UK tended to be highly mechanised. Attempts to interview a Zimbabwean couple who, according to a key informant, had broken into agricultural farming in England, and were commercially growing green maize among other crops, proved fruitless. Respondents (who fell into the 'other') included travel consultants, a studio manager, flower cutters, a sensory specialist, a couple of freelance writers and hairstylists. Those in the general worker (casual labour) category included domestic workers, waiters/waitresses, security guards, bar attendants and a barber.

- **Use of professional skills**

Interestingly, in all, 76 of the respondents indicated that they were not using their professional skills in their current job, with some of them explaining that they had accepted odd jobs in the UK 'to mark time' in the hope that they would, in due course, land a job that would be commensurate with their qualifications. The odd jobs some of them embarked on included care work at senior citizens institutions, escort work, and cleaning of premises at entities such as hospitals and education institutions. A couple of respondents stated that they had been doing this kind of work for over 3 years but the heavens had still not smiled upon them, hence they were still searching for decent jobs. One respondent for instance, indicated that she knew of a former Zimbabwean headmaster who was currently working in England as a general hand, and a former Zimbabwean high school teacher who was currently working outside London as a shop assistant. "*How the mighty have fallen……*", she quipped with a cynical smile. Thus, many of the respondents in this category were highly qualified

individuals who because of the unsavory circumstances they found themselves in, had ended up taking up menial work in an effort to eke out a living.

Hence, sadly, many individuals (e.g. engineers, doctors, nurses laboratory technicians, etc) who had been trained at great cost to their home country (Zimbabwe) and whose skills remained in great demand back home had, apparently out of desperation, accepted jobs (upon arrival in the UK) which did not provide them with an opportunity to make use of the skills (and the work experience) they had acquired back in Zimbabwe. These exiled individuals - thanks to the volatile political and economic situation obtaining back home, were now (in an effort to make ends meet) engaged in menial work in the UK, including in such activities as care work or general labour.

- **Earnings**

The study was also interested in establishing what each respondent considered to be their main source of income. One hundred and sixty-five (165) respondents stated that their main source of income was the formal sector job which they held, while the remainder indicated that they depended virtually on piecework or on informal sector and related ventures (See Table 4). There were a few cases of people who held jobs that required them to work say only a single day per week; for instance cleaning an institution's premises on Sunday nights in preparation for the following (working) week. A few respondents involved in this kind of arrangement explained that this forced them to engage in multiple modes of livelihood, usually informal income earning activities, since it was impossible to survive on wages derived from one day a week kind of employment.

Table 4: Main sources of income

Sector	**Frequency**	
	Frequency	**%**
Formal Sector	165	77.46
Informal Sector	8	3.76
Piece-work	22	10.33
Other	18	8.45
Total	**213**	**100.00**

N = 250; Missing = 37

In terms of regularity of income, a large number of respondents (82.25%) indicated that they received their incomes on a monthly basis, while 8.4% of them got their income weekly. As

table 5 shows, 8 of the respondents (3.46%) received their income daily, and these included taxi operators, as well as those individuals who sold wares in the informal sector. Those involved in escort work and commercial sex work too would probably fall into this category as well. One individual, who gave extra lessons and/or coached children who were being home-schooled, was also paid on a daily basis by the parents/guardians of the children. Another respondent who taught English Language to migrants from Eastern Europe, again was paid on the basis of a similar arrangement.

Table: 5 Regularity of income

Frequency	**N**	**%**
Monthly	190	82.25
Weekly	33	14.29
Daily	8	3.46
Total	**231**	**100**

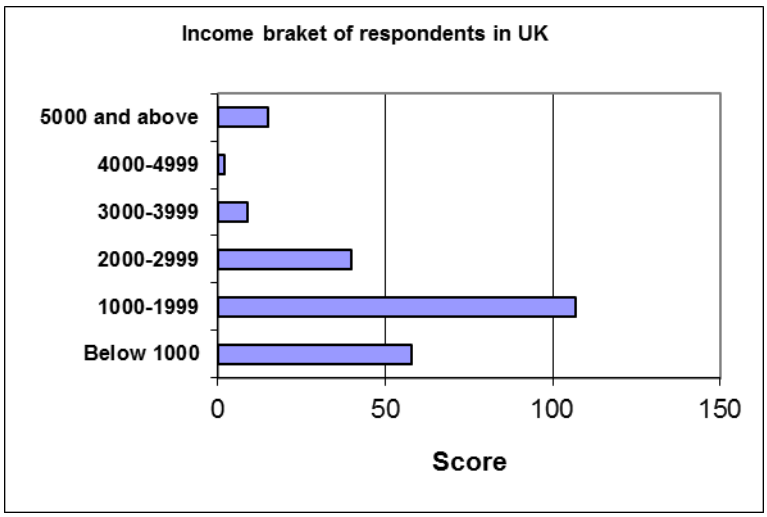
N= 250; Missing cases = 19

Participants were also asked to indicate how much they earned per month. As figure 8 shows, 231 respondents answered the question. The largest single group of respondents (107) reported that they earned between 1 000 and 1 999 Pounds Sterling per month, while 58 respondents stated that they earned below 1 000 Pounds per month. Forty (40) respondents reportedly earned between 2 000-2 999 Pounds, while 11 earned between 3 000 and 4 999 Pounds per month. Fifteen respondents claimed to earn 5 000 Pounds or more per month, and among this group, were a couple of social workers. The research team could not verify whether or not any of these respondents had deliberately inflated their earnings. The figures therefore have to be read with caution given that some respondents appeared to have indicated highly inflated figures, presumably to impress the researcher, or to try and 'justify' their decision to remain in the Diaspora despite the challenges they faced on a day-to-day basis away from home.

While the figures of earnings might have been in dispute, what was incontrovertible was the fact that respondents in the executive positions earned more than individuals in the lower ranks of the employment ladder. As noted, for a large number of the respondents, the incomes were a combination of earnings from regular formal sector salaries/wages and informal sector

-generated earnings; this was particularly the case in situations where some individuals holding formal jobs also tended to engage in moonlighting (i.e. informal sector activities). This, as alluded to earlier, was a common pattern as the migrants struggled to make ends meet. Again, as indicated earlier, many indicated that they did this because they felt obliged to remit money to relatives and friends back home in Zimbabwe.

Figure 8: Income bracket



- **Coping with challenges**

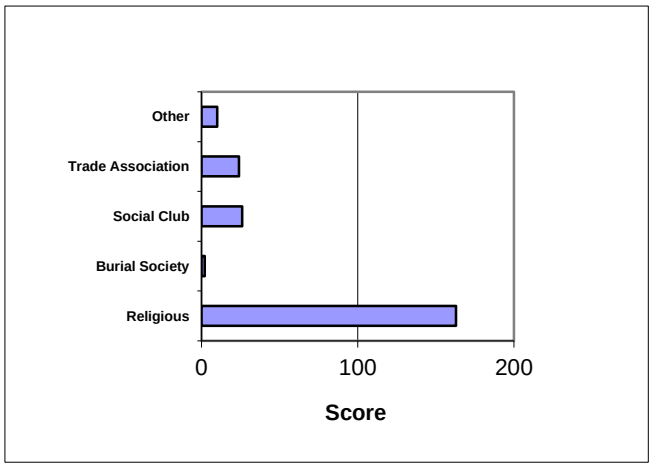
While some respondents quoted seemingly inflated figures of their earnings (as indicated in Figure 8), it was obvious many of those whom participated in the study were struggling to make ends meet. This was evident from insinuations and body language of some of those whom members of the research team had face-to-face interaction with. In the process of data gathering, some respondents would make comments like *zvakapresser/kunzima* (vernacular for life is extremely hard) when asked about their life and times in exile. Many were of the view that life in the UK was generally expensive, and one had to sweat heavily for every Pound one put in one's pocket. This observation was corroborated by all the five key informants who participated in the study.

Given that some respondents did not command a regular income, while others survived on piece-jobs and related informal sector ventures which were characterized by irregular income, the study sought to establish how such respondents coped with life particularly in cases of emergency. Many of these respondents indicated that they often turned to social groups for

social support. Several of them confessed they would not have survived the enormous psychological pressures they faced on a daily basis, had it not been for the 'intervention' of social groups. They thus expressed appreciation for the role played by these groups in respect of rendering social support to desperate colleagues. Most of the respondents reported subscribing to a number of different social and spiritual affiliations such as religious groups, burial societies, trade and social clubs. Others belonged to what they termed an association of exiled 'Diasporans'. A number of them reported belonging to more than a single social group. The most popular social group, as Figure 9 shows, tended to be religious affiliations, with 67% of those that responded to the question stating they belonged to such a group. Popular religions to which many of them were affiliated included the Anglican, AFM, Catholic and SDA churches as well as a host of Africa traditional sects and Pentecostal groups.

Apart from religious affiliations, 38 respondents reported belonging to a trade association, and most of these were in the technical and medical fields. Naturally the affiliations in this regard were all work-related, and some paid monthly subscriptions for the privilege of participating in the activities of these associations and related groups. They explained that the trade associations had an in-built social component which assisted them to 'psychosocially unwind'. A total of 13 respondents in the 'Other' category reported belonging to a host of social/political groups, and these included overseas branches of Zimbabwean political groups – in particular the ruling (Zanu PF) and main opposition (MDC) political parties in Zimbabwe. These 'groups' reportedly played a major role in helping the exiled Zimbabwe nationals to cope at the social level. In a few cases, individuals had been assisted by social groups with food or money to pay rent. Others received counseling, particularly in the context of religious affiliations. In a few other cases, through these groups individuals got linked with potential employers, or helped them fight deportation.

Figure 9: Membership of social group or association



- **Future plans**

Research (Mupedziswa, 1993) has shown that in most cases life in exile tends to be far from a 'stroll in the park', it is therefore not surprising that many exiled people often yearn for an opportunity to go back home. The respondents in the current study were therefore asked what their plans were for the future, particularly given the hardships that many of them appeared to be grappling with, in exile in the UK. They were asked whether indeed they had any intention to return to Zimbabwe on a permanent basis at some point, and also what their retirement plans were. As figure 10 shows, only 162 respondents answered this question, and of these, 89 stated that they planned to return to Zimbabwe someday, while the remainder (73) either indicated they had no plans to ever return to settle in Zimbabwe (28), or that they were undecided (45).

Of the 89 respondents who indicated they planned to return to Zimbabwe some day, the comments they made included the following:

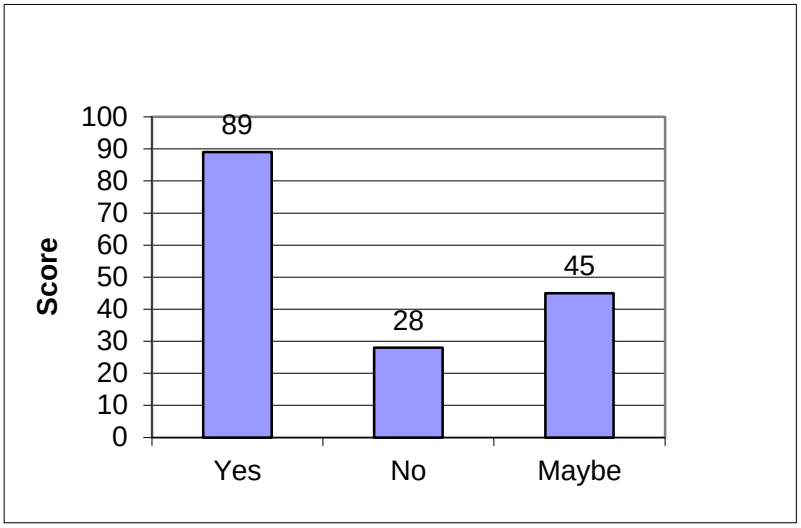
- "I would like to retire in Zimbabwe"
- "I intend to return home (to Zimbabwe) someday…."
- "I am building a home to rest (in Zimbabwe) when I retire"
- "I will retire at home (in Zimbabwe) as a consultant"
- "Yes, home sweet home – though the country's economy is currently in tatters"
- "Yes I have no intention of dying in the UK"
- "I plan to invest in Mozambique but live in Zimbabwe".

Of the 28 respondents who indicated they had no plans to ever return to Zimbabwe, the specific responses in this regard included the following:

- "I love the UK, I will die here"
- "No, Zimbabwe is dead as a country"

- I have married here - I am not going back"
- England is a beautiful country, I like it here"
- "Return? - over my dead body".

Figure 10: Do you plan to ever return to Zimbabwe?



The remainder of those who responded to the question (45) were apparently 'sitting on the fence'- undecided on this seemingly crucial matter. With these, the refrain was "maybe" they might return to Zimbabwe some day, but would not commit themselves at that stage. Specific responses given by respondents who fell into this category included the following:

- "If conditions improve"
- "I have never really thought about it"
- "If the political and socioeconomic situation changes"
- "Only if the queen of England decides otherwise"
- "Not decided"
- "Democracy (or lack of it) will inform the decision to return, or not to".

Thus, overall, a majority of the respondents indicated that they planned to return to Zimbabwe, although only at a later stage. The feeling among this cohort of the study sample was that the time was not yet ripe to do so as the conditions that led to their leaving the country had still not changed. Some of them stated that, in fact, if anything, the conditions had, in the interim period, actually further deteriorated. Effectively, 45% of those respondents who answered this question were not really thinking of, nor enthusiastic about, going back to Zimbabwe to live there in the future. This figure constitutes quite a significant statistic, which effectively suggests that the skills possessed by many of these people would probably never be used to develop Zimbabwe again, ever.

5. Discussion

Many Zimbabwean migrants in the Diasporas preferred the UK as their destination of choice, resulting in thousands upon thousands of them finding their way into that country. That they preferred this particular destination may relate to the fact that the UK was the colonizing power during pre-independent Zimbabwe. The heavy flow of human traffic in the form of Zimbabwe nationals into the United Kingdom was only stemmed late in 2002 when the British government introduced visa restrictions (Mathuthu, 2003). The visa requirement for Zimbabwe nationals traveling to the United Kingdom, when introduced, helped to drastically curtail the number of new arrivals from Zimbabwe at British ports of entry. Incidentally, since the introduction of the visa Zimbabwe reportedly witnessed a four-fold increase in the number of its citizens denied entry particularly for short-term visits to Britain (Holloway, 2003). This paper, however, focused on those exiled Zimbabwean migrants who managed to make their way into the UK, and were still on that country's soil at the time of the study.

The paper has alluded to the fact that nearly one million Zimbabwean migrants managed to find their way into the UK, the vast majority of them having arrived between 2000 and 2003. Upon arrival in the UK, some of them managed to regularize their stay, while scores of others had to stay in the country as undocumented immigrants. The study established that, life had not been a bed of roses for most of the Zimbabwean nationals who sought asylum in the United Kingdom, particularly those who had no valid immigration papers. Scores of them ended up in detention, facing deportation due to lack of valid immigration papers. At one point, the UK government reportedly consulted with security companies, regarding the possibility of tagging asylum seekers (including Zimbabwe nationals) so that they could not abscond. The Zimbabwean nationals without valid immigration papers, however, did everything in their power to resist deportation. For instance, in mid-2005, scores of them (i.e. Zimbabwean nationals) facing deportation from the UK took the option of embarking on a hunger strike, in an effort to resist deportation. In a couple of instances, undocumented Zimbabwean nationals facing deportation reportedly resorted to cutting their wrists with sharp instruments, in an effort to avoid being sent back home. Others appealed to local politicians, as well as to human rights organizations, with varied results.

The events/actions chronicled events above do serve to illustrate the extent to which some of the exiled Zimbabwean nationals were prepared to go, in order to remain outside their

beloved country which happened to be in a serious socio-economic and political crisis. At the time, unemployment in Zimbabwe stood at over 80%, while the country's debt burden peaked at several billion US dollars (Bloch, 2004). A decade later, the situation has continued to worsen. According to a recent NewZimbabwe (2015) article, Zimbabweans wishing to go back (home) are being deterred by the deteriorating situation as the country's situation is fast declining. It further noted that lack of confidence in the present government (which has been in power since 1980), and insignificant Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), added to the bleak picture. This suggests those yearning for the situation to change for the better, have a long wait ahead of them.

There is no doubt that lack of valid immigration papers had severely curtailed the chances of a significant number of exiled Zimbabwe nationals from landing decent jobs, resulting in some of them turning to the informal sector for survival. This is true, not only of Zimbabwean nationals based in the UK, but also those based in other countries such as South Africa, as well. The 'dog-eat-dog' nature of existence associated with informal sector ventures had left an indelible mark on many of the exiled Zimbabwean nationals. Poor working conditions coupled with poor wages had result in many of the exiles taking several jobs at one go. In a study conducted by Donnelly (2004:2), a migrant involved in informal trade in South Africa had been quoted as saying, "*It's almost like slave labour*". Situations in which individuals held several jobs at one go obviously had negative consequences not only regarding their health status, but perhaps more importantly in terms of social life of the individuals concerned and indeed their significant others. Little wonder one respondent in the currrent UK study quipped, "*We have no social life to write home about*".

McGregor (2007) in her study of Zimbabwean nationals in the UK reported the stress Zimbabweans had experienced trying to support themselves and dependents through excessive hours of low status and often poorly paid work. She further alluded to the strain of working in a strongly ferminised and racialised workplaces and the insecurities and abuse provided by informality. Key informants speculated that the main reason for holding second and third jobs was that most people could hardly survive on one salary, particularly given the combination of the high cost of living and the fact that relatives back in Zimbabwe expected to be assisted regularly. In some cases individuals faced challenges in accessing even piece-jobs, and menial work in general. Apparently the situation has since worsened. This observation was corroborated by a report in Newsdzezimbabwe (2015) which indicated that

in the UK jobs are no longer easy to come by, the reason being that people from the European Union (EU) were gobbling most of the jobs including the nursing of senior citizens.

Clearly life in the UK has proved untenable for many Zimbabwe migrants exiles in that country. Respondents who operated in the informal sector in particular, or who survived on piece-jobs have often found themselves in the predicament that they even had difficulty in opening a bank account, for instance. One respondent narrated how he had had to carry around on him everywhere he went, his entire savings, an amount which was in excess of 3 000 Pounds Sterling, as he did not have a bank account. The reason for not own a bank account was because he did not meet the requirements for opening an account. Nor did he enjoy the option of leaving the money hidden at home because the (communal) place where he resided was very insecure as there were several other persons sharing accommodation with him. His only option would have been to 'rent an account' from a colleague, but this option too often turned out to be extremely risky.

In the UK, the challenge of landing a decent job has certainly not been a preserve of the undocumented migrants alone. Even documented migrants who were professionals in their own right, had found the employment environment rather suffocating, partly due to the influx of people from within the EU, as alluded to earlier. Some have alleged that racism too has at times reared its ugly head but often in rather subtle ways, and that many Zimbabwean nationals were being discriminated against. The explanation given is that some British citizens have tended to view Zimbabwean nationals in the UK with suspicion, apparently accusing some of them of being fraudsters, denting the reputation of many innocent individuals in the process. There cannot be any denying that some foreigners (perhaps including a small percentage of Zimbabwean nationals) may have been involved in criminal activities in the United Kingdom; it is a truism that a few desperate individuals may have crossed the line, and ended up having a brush with the law. However, this should not warrant the stereotyping which has resulted in many Zimbabwean nationals being painted with the same brush. Some believe this negative attitude held by some Britons had poisoned the employment environment for many a Zimbabwean national residing in that country. However, the key informants disputed the contention that many Zimbabweans were viewed in bad light in the UK. In their view, Zimbabwean nationals were actually sought after because of their diligence, hard work and self-discipline.

The question of to what extent Zimbabwean nationals in the Diasporas in general and the UK in particular, have been able to secure the kind of jobs that allow them to flourish in their chosen professional fields, has been a subject of much speculation and even conjecture. Many highly educated professionals confessed to holding jobs that were not commensurate with their qualifications. This of course has implications for the remuneration packages they received from their employers. A careful analysis of the figures of earnings given by the respondents seemed to suggest that many of them receive decent, living wages and salaries. However, it is very probable that many respondents may have exaggerated their earnings. One key informant was adamant that the reported earnings had been exaggerated given that many of the figures were, (according to this informant), inconsistent with the general income trends in the UK. The consultant went on to explain that this was the case apparently even taking into consideration the fact that those engaged as consultants earned quite substantial amounts of money. Another key informant corroborated the viewpoint, and further explained that the Zimbabwean migrants had probably inflated the figures in an effort to declare to all and sundry that by coming to the UK, they (migrants) had made the right decision. Yet privately such people might actually have been regretting the decision to migrate to the UK. These contentions by the two key informants probably do hold some water even judging by the body language and comments that were made by many respondents during fieldwork for the study. For the above-stated reasons, the data on the earnings have to be taken with a pinch of salt.

The fact that many Zimbabwean nationals - including professionals – were obliged to hold several jobs at the same time, appears to add credence to this suspicion. That, for instance, an individual might be a professional nurse in a hospital setting but work part-time as a care-giver (carer) in a senior citizens' institutions in their spare time, and at the same time hold a cleaning job which required them to work odd hours (like say 5am – 7am), (after which they would rush to their formal job), suggests the individual in question desperately needed to augment their income for some pressing reason. Such a person obviously would have no social life to talk about, and is unlikely to operate at full throttle at their formal job. That one respondent confessed to doing "full-time" piece-work with five different "employers" dotted across the city of Cambridge, for instance, boggled the mind. These examples serve to suggest that the earnings of many exiled Zimbabwe nationals, including those holding professional jobs, tended to be insufficient when viewed against a backdrop of their financial

obligations, which of course often included remitting money to family members back in Zimbabwe.

The challenge of obtaining a job commensurate with one's qualifications has not been limited to Zimbabwean nationals in the UK alone; this has tended to be true of the situation of Zimbabwean nationals based in other countries across the world as well. In the case of the UK, racism has been given as one of the explanations. In South Africa these challenges have played out in the form of xenophobia. Even with impressive qualifications, many exiled Zimbabwean nationals have still found themselves being overworked and underpaid. Yet many of them have found themselves with very limited room to maneuver – a case of being 'caught up between a rock and a hard place'. As McGregor (2007) observed, these people have taken the decision to soldier on despite the poor working environment because they have to support themselves and their dependents, and also send remittances back to Zimbabwe.

The explanation for overwork and underpayment proffered by one key informant was that potential employers were often aware of the pariah state label that Zimbabwe had 'earned' over the years as a result of sticking to controversial policies, and they (i.e. the potential employers) realised that exiled Zimbabwe nationals were quite desperate ofr opportunities to eke out a living as many of them could not go back home due to the unsavory political and socioeconomic state of affairs obtaining in their country, and for this reason they (employers) could afford to ill-treat them by offering them low pay, and even overworking them. This has caused many exiled Zimbabwean nationals to tolerate abuse and racism which is rife in the work environment in which they operate in the UK. Many have had to settle for care work, using it as a means of coping, finding opportunity to meet family obligations and personal ambitions (McGregor, 2007, Pasura, 2014).

Many Zimbabwean migrants who made it into the UK have faced serious challenges not only on the employment front but also at the social level. Many of them have found themselves in a quandary – being alienated from family and friends back home in Zimbabwe, and not being able to return home since they had been granted asylum. Kanhema (2003:1) has observed, *"Thousands of Zimbabweans who sneaked into the United Kingdom under the guise of seeking political asylum have found themselves alienated from their families as they can no longer return to invest or attend important family functio*ns", including funerals of close

relatives. This has had serious psychological and emotional impacts among many of these exiles, given that in some cases families have broken up. This is probably why Pasura, 2014) argued that Zimbabwean communities in the UK had tended to be fragmented and fractured in terms of such factors as identity and gender. In such circumstances, job opportunities tended to dwindle, and as for those who might be employed, this lack of social support may result in the job itself suffering immensely given that the job-holder may find it difficult to concentrate, cope and give their undivided attention to the tasks at hand, in a situation where the social environment of many of them is for all intents and purposes, dysfunctional. Even so, many of the Zimbabwean nationals have soldiered on, essentially thanks to the social support measures in place that have helped cushion many of them, as alluded to earlier.

6. Conclusion

Thus, although many exiled Zimbabwean migrants who landed in the UK had high hopes of leading 'blissful' life-styles, many of them were disappointed as they soon realized that all "glitters is not gold"; indeed, despite the UK being a developed country, life in that country was indeed not a bed of roses. Many of those who participated in the current study confirmed that they had found life in the UK extremely difficult, particularly as they had failed to find the kind of jobs that would facilitate decent life-styles. Many found themselves being obliged by circumstances to engage in multiple modes of livelihood in an effort to augment their otherwise meagre earnings. A complicating factor has been the obligation felt by many exiled Zimbabwe nationals to remit some of their earnings to families back in Zimbabwe. Many have also realised, to their chagrin, that they would not be able to use their professional skills in the low level jobs they had landed, while others had had to contend with taking on odd jobs. Others still had to shelve their high qualifications and embark on a 're-skilling' exercise (McGregor, 2007) as they realised their existing skills were not readily marketable, which route of course did not come cheap given that they often had to pay huge amounts of money to acquire the new skills. Hence, sadly, many Zimbabwe nationals, who (back home) had been educated and trained at great cost to their country and whose skills remained most relevant back home (in Zimbabwe) had, apparently out of desperation, ended up accepting menial jobs in the UK which deprived them not only of their dignity and job satisfaction, but of decent incomes as well.

Thanks to the volatile political and economic situation back home, many Zimbabwean nationals exiled in the UK, have found themselves engaged in dirty, and demeaning work in the UK, including in the care industry (McGregor, 2007). Perhaps McGregor and Primorac (2010:20) captured the sentiment rather succinctly, when they noted that, the contradictions of the status attached (by Zimbabwean nationals) to movement to the UK "are captured in the jokes that cast movement to Britain as joining BBC (British Bottom Cleaners). What is particularly sad though about the whole scenario is that many of the objects of these 'dirty' jokes, have been individuals with a middle-class background and impressive professional qualifications which they had not been able to ultilise in the United Kingdom. In terms of the way forward, the situation is unlikely to change unless and until the socioeconomic and political landscape in Zimbabwe changes for the better, as this would potentially open up options for these exiled Zimbabwean nationals. Those in power in Zimbabwe owe it to the country, to introduce policies that will facilitate progressive change for the benefit of all. It is regrettable to note that the perceived glitter (by the exiled Zimbabwean nationals) of the United Kingdom (as a developed country) had not translated into decent job opportunities for the majority of those exiled Zimbabwean nationals who flocked to that that country when the socioeconomic and political situation in that country became untenable.

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