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“WE HAVE NO SOCIAL LIFE TO WRITE HOME ABOUT:” JOB OPPORTUNITY EXPERIENCES OF EXILED ZIMBABWE NATIONALS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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ABSTRACT

It is a common course that two contested events that occurred in Zimbabwe in 2000 – the launch of a controversial land reform program and a disputed presidential election – triggered a mass exodus of the country’s nationals to the Diasporas. The destinations of choice included South Africa, Botswana, Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. An estimated 3.5 million Zimbabweans reportedly fled the country mostly between 2000 and 2003 and approximately one million of them settled in the United Kingdom. Incontrovertibly, the mass exodus caused a massive brain drain: by some accounts, up to 60 percent of the country’s professionals – engineers, accountants, lawyers and doctors left the country. This article draws on the findings of a study conducted in the United Kingdom by the author during 2005-2006. Some 250 exiled Zimbabwean migrants across Britain participated in the study, which inter alia, sought to document their experiences relative to employment opportunities. The study established that many of the Zimbabwean migrants faced enormous challenges regarding employment, with some lamenting that they had, upon arrival in the United Kingdom, rather belatedly realized, with respect to this developed country that ‘All that glitters (UK) is not gold’.

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1. 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 characterized 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), while for those migrating for political reasons, the triggers may include 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 regularize their stay through the acquisition of relevant documents while others for various reasons may remain undocumented. In many such cases, the circumstances are such that it becomes difficult for forced migrants to regularize their stay, with the result that some migrants remain undocumented even if they would have preferred otherwise.

In the context of Zimbabwe, two hotly contested events that occurred in 2000 — the launch of a controversial land reform program and a disputed presidential election — triggered a mass exodus of Zimbabwean nationals into the Diasporas (Mupedziswa, 2009a,b). The destinations of choice included South Africa, the United Kingdom, Botswana,

Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand. An estimated 3.5 million Zimbabweans reportedly fled the country between 2000 and 2003 (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 2004; Donnelly, 2004). Of this figure, approximately one million settled in the United Kingdom (Donnelly, 2004). While admittedly, scores of migrants had also left the country before this period, the vast majority fled the country during the stated (volatile) period (2000–2003). The unprecedented emigration of Zimbabwean nationals during that time constituted a massive brain drain for the country, which had serious consequences for the country's socio-economic development.

By some accounts, more than 70 percent of all Zimbabwean university graduates were working outside the country by the end of 2003 (Hill, 2004). Other commentators suggested that approximately 60 percent 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 percent of those who 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, p.4) who observed: "Since the start of the economic and political crisis in the country in 1997, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, radiographers, lecturers, social workers, lawyers, mechanics, technicians, and 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 and employed by a British local authority (Mupedziswa & Ushamba, 2006). Thus, incredibly large numbers of professionals had left the country. Most of these professionals 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 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 80 percent (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 instead 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 United Kingdom. The article documents the experiences of these exiled Zimbabwe nationals who fled to the UK regarding 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 approximately one million persons appears to have attained a broad consensus (Donnelly, 2004). Of this figure, 250 persons participated in the study by responding to an interview schedule/questionnaire. Within this sample, seven 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 were drawn from England and London in particular, partly because the region appeared to have the greatest concentration of the migrants but also for logistical reasons.

2.2. Sampling Methods

All four “states” that constitute the United Kingdom 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 through 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 based in various parts of the UK, and they assisted in connecting the research team members with exiled Zimbabwean nationals across the length and breadth of the 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 using a self-administered questionnaire/interview schedule. Five key informants also participated in the study using an interview guide. These were drawn from academic (two university professors) local administration (two 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 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 through 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. 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 the fieldwork. Once the 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 and 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, 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 had 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 percent) were drawn from England, with London claiming the lion's share of the sample, followed by the cities of Cambridge and Birmingham. Regarding Scotland (6.80 percent), most respondents were drawn from Edinburgh, while in Northern Ireland (3.6 percent) respondents were drawn mainly from the cities of Belfast and Londonderry. Regarding Wales (2.4 percent), respondents were mainly drawn from Cardiff and Swansea. The types of residence of respondents varied, with a few of them indicating they lived in private or council lease houses while others indicated that they lived in private apartments and a few others (6 percent) did not indicate their type of dwelling. It is possible that those who indicated 'other' included the 'nomadic' ones who confirmed they moved from one acquaintance'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.

Gender and Age

Of the sample of 250 respondents, 136 were female while the remaining respondents 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 that 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. Forty-one 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.

Table 1: Area of Residence in the United Kingdom

Area	Frequency	Percent
England	203	81.20
Scotland	17	6.80
Northern Ireland	9	3.60
Wales	6	2.40
Other	15	6.00
Total	250	100

N = 250. Missing Cases = 15

Education Level

Of the 232 respondents who answered the question on education levels a relatively large number (57 percent) had attained tertiary education (first degree), or better (postgraduate qualification) in one field or another. Forty-one percent of the respondents had completed secondary education, while five 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 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 a basic education to enable one to provide the means of subsistence. In Africa, most illiterate and semi-literate asylum seekers tend to flee to neighboring countries, and, with few exceptions, hardly ever flee beyond the borders of the African continent (Mupedziswa, 2009a,b).

Figure 1: Age of Respondents

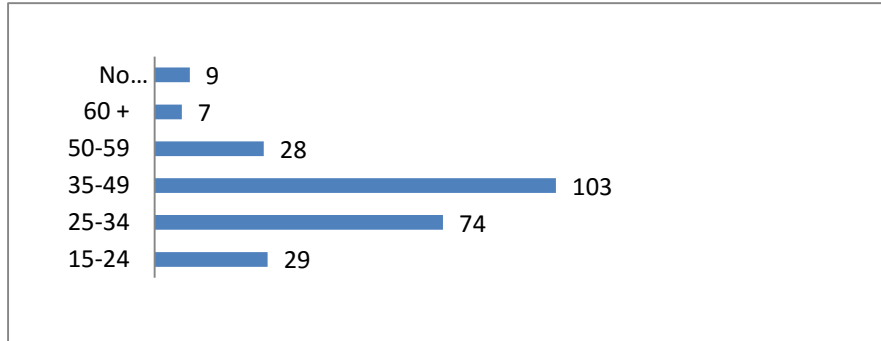
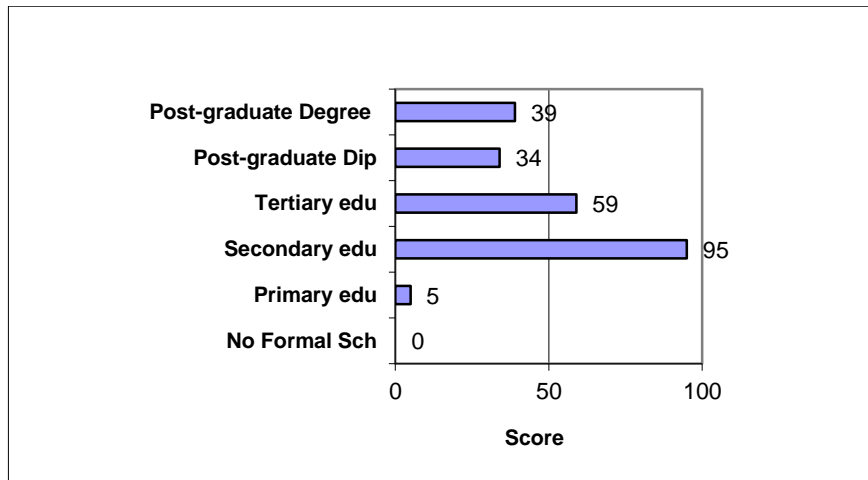


Figure 2: Education Level of Respondents



Marital Status

As shown in Table 2, 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 is culturally 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 their previous marriages, 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 British men. 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 did not intend to return to Zimbabwe again (despite having children and first husbands back home in Zimbabwe).

Table 2: Marital Status of Respondents

Status	Frequency	Percent
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 United Kingdom

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 by introducing a stringent visa requirement. Once the visa requirement had been introduced, it became extremely difficult for exiled Zimbabwean migrants to bring their family members to 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 that 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 in Zimbabwe.

Household Size

The study sought to establish the number of persons comprising 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.

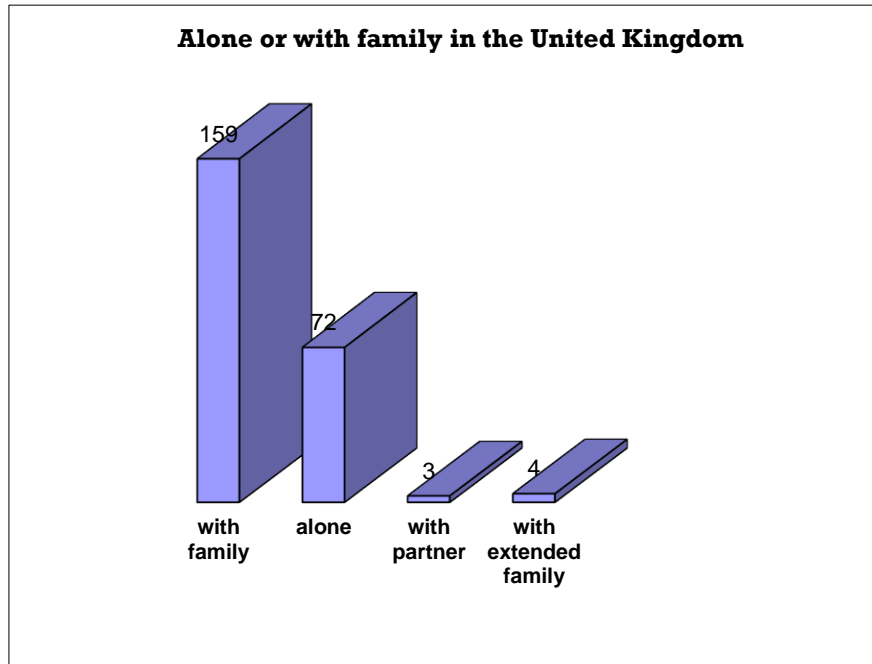
Figure 3: Migrant Family Composition in United Kingdom**Length of stay in the United Kingdom**

Figure five shows that 189 (77 percent) of respondents 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 a stringent visa requirement. Prior to that, Zimbabwe passport holders could without hindrance, fly to the UK and obtain a visa at the point of entry.

Figure 4: Number of Persons per Household

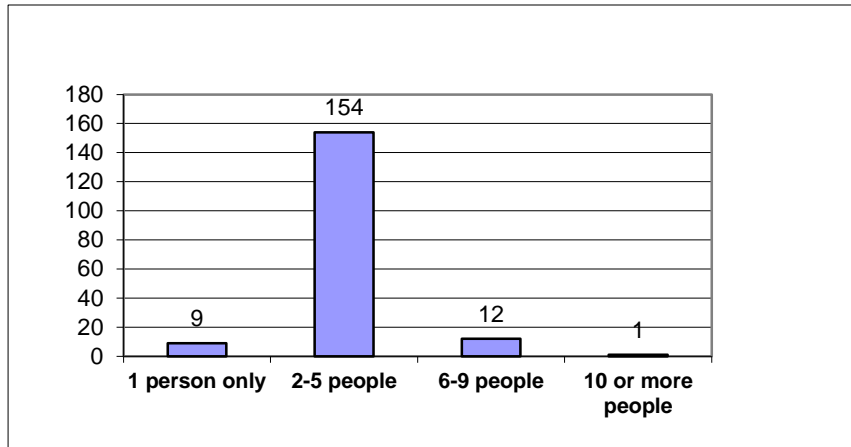
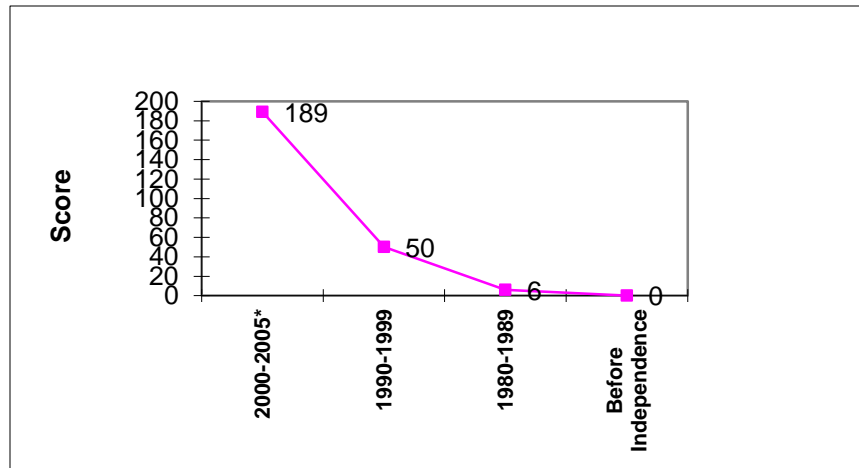


Figure 5: Year moved to the United Kingdom



N= 245; Missing = 5

The respondent who had been in the UK the longest arrived in 1985, and this was someone reportedly running away from political persecution in Matabeleland Province of Zimbabwe. The respondent 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 Prov-

ince. However, as noted earlier, the vast majority of respondents 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 noted that 43 percent of those they had interviewed in Zimbabwe indicated that they would prefer to stay in their emigration destination for longer than five years, suggesting they did not view emigration as a temporary exile. Indeed, many migrants from Zimbabwe viewed their move as either permanent or long-term relocation. These migrants would of course try to secure permanent jobs upon their arrival in the country of destination, in this case the UK.

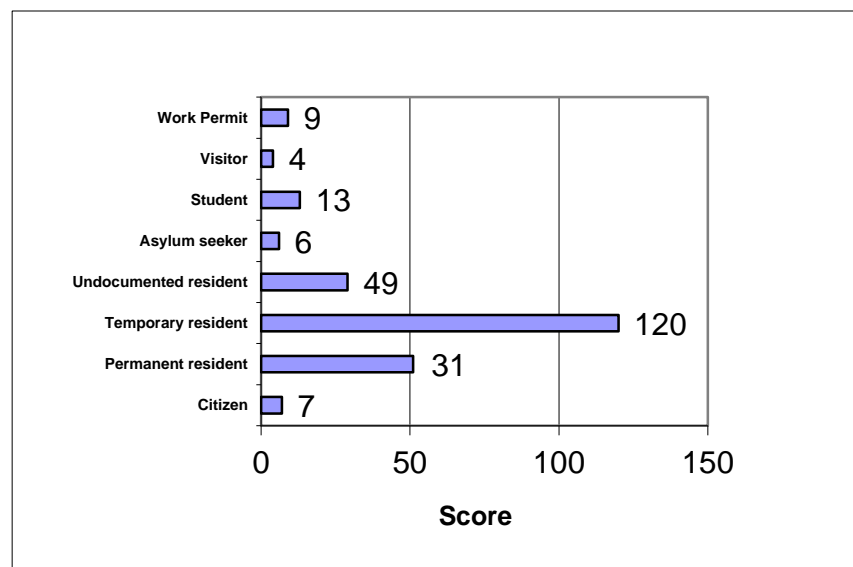
Residence Status in the United Kingdom

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

Forty-nine (20.5 percent) 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 percent 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 six 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 return.

Figure 6: Residence status in the United Kingdom



N=250; Missing Cases = 11

4. Employment Experiences of Exiled Zimbabwean Migrants in the United Kingdom

The article is 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 to 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 job hunting and on-the-job experiences.

Skills brought from Zimbabwe

Eighty per cent (80 percent) of the respondents indicated that they had held formal jobs that they had abandoned back home in Zimbabwe. This 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 percent of their respondents had left Zimbabwe for work related reasons. Regarding the potential for employment, the '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 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 supported by professional qualifications, as some had acquired their skills on the job without necessarily having relevant academic qualifications.

One hundred and eighty-six (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, five in Zimbabwe and the UK, while the remaining few indicated that they had attained their professional qualifications in the UK, United States and Zambia. This perhaps serves to confirm the widely held notion that Zimbabwe had lost to the Diasporas a considerable proportion of its skilled work force — individuals who had been trained at great cost to the country.

Employment Opportunities

Upon arrival in the UK, 165 (66 percent) 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. Twenty-six (26) of the respondents did not indicate the nature of their employment. 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 casual workers (or general laborers) – 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. Other derogatory terms used include BBC (British Bottom Cleaners), in reference to the fact that some did caring work which involved bathing older people in residences of senior citizens.

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 their skills since 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 who 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 gone to waste. Several respondents, however,

indicated that they had voluntarily decided to shelve their professional qualifications and embark on a re-skilling exercise (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 realized that their area of expertise was oversubscribed. Those respondents who were in the technical sectors (for example, IT) mostly made this confession. This indeed was an unfortunate development given that, as noted earlier, the skills that they now sought to 'discard' or shelve had been acquired at tremendous cost to the developing country of Zimbabwe.

Sector of Employment

As Table 3 shows, the 224 respondents who indicated that they had a job (either formal or non-formal, professional or non-professional) 53 percent (119) were in the health sector, in specialized areas like medicine, nursing and laboratory technology, while quite a number were in care work. The sample of health personnel included five medical doctors, 46 state registered nurses (SRNs), 38 care workers, 21 social workers, 15 health assistants and 15 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 since they could not secure jobs commensurate with their qualifications. Some nurses, however, took on care work in addition to their professional work. Thus, overall a large number of exiled Zimbabwe nationals in the sample were engaged in work that did not necessarily require the use of their professional skills. For some, this was despite holding impressive professional qualifications.

The sub-sample comprised of those in the engineering field including an aircraft engineer, a chemical engineer, a telecommunication 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 accepted low-level jobs because of limited opportunities available at upper levels in the entities in which they had sought employment.

Table 3: Sector of Employment in the United Kingdom

Sector	Frequency	
	United Kingdom	Percent
Architecture	2	0.89
Agriculture	0	0.00
Business	37	16.52
Education	35	15.63
Engineering	11	4.91
Health	119	53.12
Law	1	0.45
Other	19	8.48
Total	224	100.00

N = 250; Missing = 26.

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 salon. 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,” hence he was seriously considering re-skilling, once resources were available.

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 in Zimbabwe. With regard to those holding multiple jobs, one job would be official while the other jobs would be unofficial. In one instance, the respondent 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 five days in a week because they both worked long, arduous and often odd hours, and consequently, they were often obliged to communicate through small scribbled 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 realized 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. The explanation from the key informants 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 by the research team to interview a Zimbabwean couple who, according to one key informant, had engaged in agricultural farming in England, and had been commercially growing green maize among other crops, proved fruitless. Respondents in the 'other' category included travel consultants, a studio manager, flower cutters, a sensory specialist, a couple of freelance writers and hairstylists. Those in the general worker (casual labor) 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 jobs, 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 citizen's 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 three 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 unsavoury circumstances they found themselves in had ended up accepting menial work in an effort to eke out a living.

Hence, sadly, many individuals – engineers, lawyers, nurses, educators, laboratory technicians, among others – 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 adequate use of the skills (and the work experience) they had acquired in Zimbabwe. These exiled individuals – thanks to the volatile political and economic situation in Zimbabwe – were, in an effort to make ends meet, now engaged in menial work in the UK, including in such activities as care work or general labor.

Earnings

The study was also interested in establishing what each respondent considered his or her main source of income. One hundred and sixty-five (165) respondents stated that their main source of income was the formal sector job that 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 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	Percent
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 the regularity of income, a large number of respondents (82.25 percent) indicated that they received their incomes on a monthly basis, while 8.4 percent of them got their income weekly. As table five shows, eight of the respondents (3.46 percent) 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 would probably fall into this category as well. One individual, who gave extra lessons in Mathematics 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 based on a similar arrangement.

Table 5: Regularity of Income

Frequency	N	Percent
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 their monthly earnings. As figure eight shows, 231 respondents answered the question. The largest single group of respondents (107) reported that they earned

between £1,000 and £1,999 per month, while 58 respondents stated that they earned below £1,000 per month. Forty (40) respondents reportedly earned £2,000-2,999, while 11 earned £3,000 – 4,999 per month. Fifteen respondents claimed to earn £5,000 or more per month, and among this group, were a couple of social workers. The research team could not verify whether 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. A couple of the key informants shared these reservations.

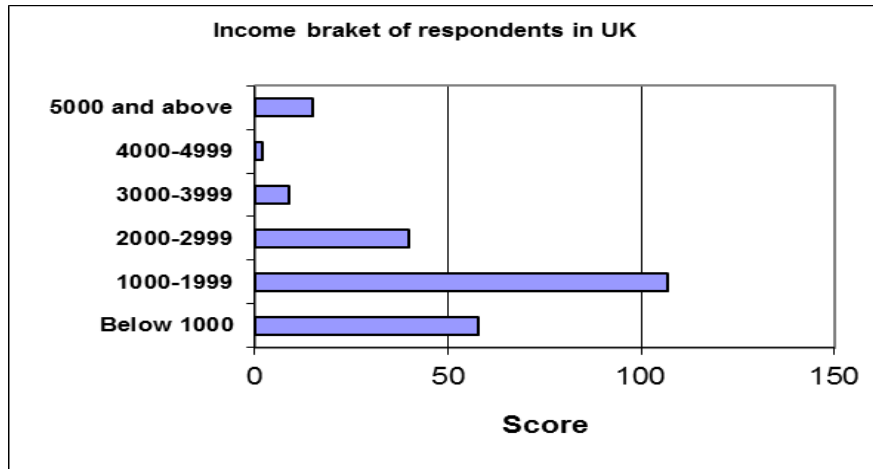
While the stated figures of earnings might have been in dispute, what was incontrovertible was the fact that respondents in executive positions earned more than was earned by those in lower ranked positions. As noted, for a large number of the respondents, the incomes were a combination of earnings from 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 – informal sector activities. This, as alluded to earlier, was a common pattern as most of the migrants apparently struggled to make ends meet. Again, as indicated earlier, many explained that they did so because they felt obliged to remit money to relatives and friends back home in Zimbabwe.

Coping with Challenges

While some respondents quoted seemingly inflated figures of their earnings – as indicated in Figure 7 – it was obvious many of those who participated in the study were struggling to make ends meet. This was evident from insinuations and body language of some of those with whom members of the research team had face-to-face interaction. In the process of data gathering, some respondents would make comments like *zvakaresser/kunzima* (vernacular for life is extremely hard) when asked about their life and times in exile in general. Many were of the view that life in the UK was generally expensive, and one had to sweat

heavily for every Pound Sterling in one's pocket. "No work, no food on the table", quipped one young man. All the five key informants corroborated this observation.

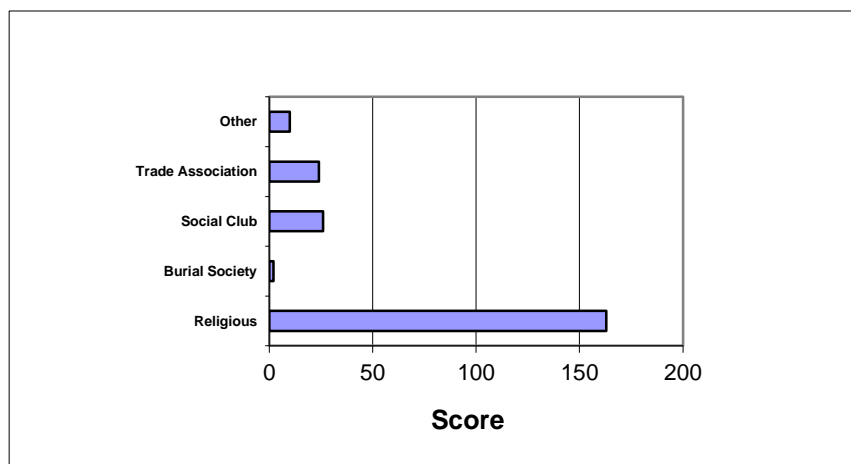
Figure 7: Income Bracket



Given that some respondents did not command a regular income, while others survived on piece-jobs and related informal sector ventures 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 rendering social support to desperate migrants. Most of the respondents reported subscribing to a number of different social and spiritual affiliations such as faith-based organizations (religious groups), burial societies, trade and social clubs. Some indicated they belonged to what they termed the association of exiled 'Diasporans'. Significantly, a number of them reported belonging to more than a single social group. The most popular social group, as Figure 8 shows, tended to be faith-based organizations (religious affiliations) with 67 percent of those

that responded to the question stating they belonged to such a group. Popular faith-based organizations to which many of them were affiliated included a host of African traditional sects and Pentecostal groups, as well as mainstream denominations like the Anglican, AFM, Catholic and SDA churches.

Figure 8: Membership of Social Group or Association



In addition to faith-based affiliation and other social organizations, 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 that assisted them to ‘psychosocially unwind’. Thirteen 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. These ‘groups’ reportedly played a major role in helping the exiled Zimbabwe nationals to cope at the social level. In a few cases, individuals received assistance from social groups with food or money to pay rent. Others re-

ceived counseling, particularly in the context of religious affiliations. In a few other cases, through these groups individuals were linked with potential employers, or were helped to fight deportation.

Future Plans

Research (Mupedziswa, 1993) has shown that in most cases, life in exile tends to be far from a 'stroll in the park,' and it is therefore not surprising that many exiled people often yearn for an opportunity to return 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 they intended to return to Zimbabwe on a permanent basis at some point, and what their retirement plans were. As figure 9 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 someday, the comments they made included the following:

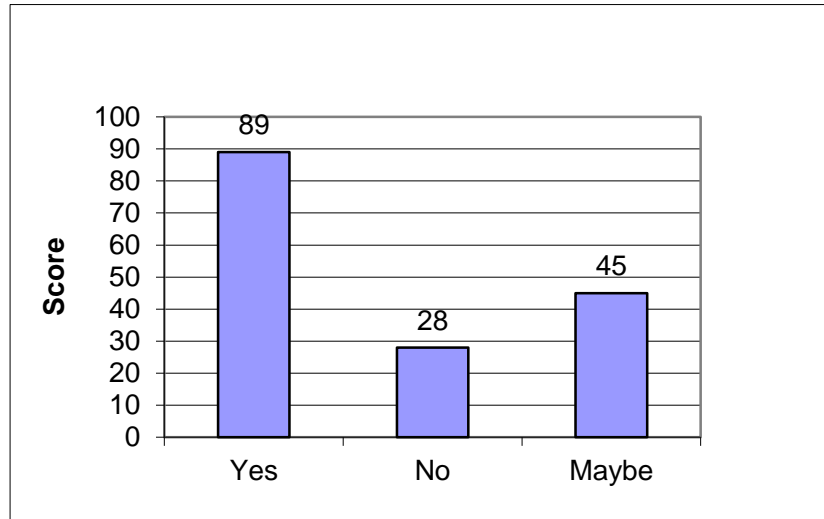
- "I would like to retire in Zimbabwe"
- "I intend to return home (to Zimbabwe) someday...."
- "I am building a home to rest (in Zimbabwe) when I retire"
- "I will retire at home (in Zimbabwe) as a consultant"
- "Yes, home sweet home – though the country's economy is currently in tatters"
- "Yes I have 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 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 9: Do you plan to 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 someday, 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 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 emigration 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 percent of those respondents who answered this question were not really thinking of, nor enthusiastic about, going back to Zimbabwe to live in the future. This figure constitutes quite a significant statistic, which effectively suggests that the skills possessed by many of these migrants 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 be a function of 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 to the United Kingdom was only stemmed late in 2002 when the British government introduced stringent visa restrictions (Mathuthu, 2003). The stringent visa requirement for Zimbabwe nationals traveling to the United Kingdom, when introduced, helped to curtail the number of new arrivals from Zimbabwe at British ports of entry. Incidentally, since the introduction of the stringent visa requirements, 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 article, however, focused on those exiled Zimbabweans who managed to make their way to the UK and were still on British soil at the time of the study.

The article has alluded to the fact that nearly one million Zimbabwean migrants managed to emigrate from Zimbabwe to 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 the undocumented Zimbabweans ended up in detention and

facing deportation due to the 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 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 (Mupedziswa. 2009a).

The events/actions chronicled in this discussion 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 socioeconomic and political crisis. At the time, unemployment in Zimbabwe was over 80 percent while the country's debt burden peaked at several billion US dollars (Bloch, 2004). A decade later, the situation had continued to deteriorate. According to a recent NewZimbabwe (2015) article, Zimbabweans wishing to return (home) were being deterred by the deteriorating situation as the country's (Zimbabwe) situation was fast declining. It further noted that the lack of confidence in the present government (which has been in power since 1980), and insignificant foreign direct investment (FDI) had added to the bleak picture. This suggests that those yearning for the situation to change for the better apparently have a long wait ahead of them.

There is no doubt that the lack of valid immigration papers had severely curtailed the chances of a significant number of exiled Zimbabwe nationals from obtaining decent jobs, resulting in some of them turning to the informal sector for survival. This is true of not only 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. In a study conducted by Donnelly (2004, p. 2), a migrant involved in informal trade in South Africa was quoted as saying, "*It's almost like slave labor*". Situations in which individuals held several jobs at one go obviously had negative consequences not only in respect of their health status, but perhaps more importantly in terms of the social life of the individuals concerned and indeed their significant others. Little wonder that one respondent in the current 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 they had experienced trying to support themselves and their dependents through excessive hours of low status and often poorly paid work. She further alluded to the strain of working in strongly feminized and racialized 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 had since worsened. This observation was corroborated by a report in *Newsdzezimbabwe* (2015) which indicated that in the UK jobs were 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. Respondents who operated in the informal sector in particular, or who survived on piece-jobs, reportedly 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 in excess of £3,000, as he did not have a bank account. The reason for not owning a personal bank account was that he did not meet the requirements for opening such an account. Nor did he enjoy the option of leaving the money hidden at home because the (communal) place where he resided was apparently very insecure as there were several

other persons sharing accommodation with him. He explained that 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 alleged that racism too had at times reared its ugly head but often in rather subtle ways, and that many Zimbabwean nationals were being discriminated against. The explanation given was that some British citizens 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 that 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 the UK. 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 had 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 respond-

ents may have exaggerated their earnings. One key informant was adamant that the reported earnings had been grossly exaggerated given that many of the figures were, according to this informant, inconsistent with the general income trends in the UK. The informant went on to explain that this was apparently the case 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 ought 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. For instance, an individual might be a professional nurse in a hospital setting but worked part-time as a caregiver in a senior citizens' institution 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 whatever 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” piecework 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,

and this has tended to be true of the situation of Zimbabwean nationals based in other countries across the world as well. Some believe this has to do with a general hatred of Zimbabwe nationals. In the case of the UK, racism has been given as one of the explanations. In South Africa, these challenges have apparently 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 and because they have to support themselves and their dependents and 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) realized that exiled Zimbabwe nationals were quite desperate for 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 the Zimbabweans 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 where 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 to 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, p.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 functions*", including funerals of

close relatives. This has had serious psychological and emotional impact 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 immense suffering 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 that "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 realized, 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 what society would describe as '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 utilize 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 country (UK) when the socioeconomic and political situation in their country became untenable.

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