

Curate's Egg: Effects of Parental Migration on Well-Being of Zimbabwean Children Left Behind

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Abstract


Zimbabwe has a long history of labor migration to Global North nations such as Britain and the United States of America, as well as to several Global South countries like South Africa and Botswana. This migration has seen a surge in remittances, spurring the crafting of policies and strategies to tap into this economic window for national development. While parental migration may be bringing economic relief to the nation and households left behind, it has often been associated with numerous challenges, particularly in the well-being of children left behind. In exploring challenges faced by children whose parents live and work abroad, a growing body of literature has emerged. This study reviews studies carried out in Zimbabwe on the effects of parental migration on the well-being of children left behind. It used a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology for primary studies deposited in three electronic libraries and downloaded by 31 December 2023. The purpose of the SLR is to develop a basis for empirical research, since this is a new study area in the country. It is anticipated that the study will contribute to the discourse on parental migration and its effects on development and nurturance practices of children left behind. Overall, the study asserts that there are both positive and negative effects of parental migration on children left behind; hence, the phenomenon is regarded as a curate's egg.


Keywords: children left behind, parental migration, well-being, positive effects, negative effects

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INTRODUCTION

One of the largest global sources of migrants, Philippines, is estimated to have nearly nine million children growing up without at least one of their parents due to migration (Dominguez and Hall, 2022). Similarly, Indonesia, a significant contributor to the international migrant workforce, is estimated to have more than four million migrants employed in more than 25 countries globally (BPS Indonesia, 2022). This figure is anticipated to rise steadily, given the clear increase in the annual migration of Indonesians rising from 72,624 in 2020 to 200,761 in 2022 and 274,964 in 2023 (BP2MI, 2023). Studies carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean show that about 21% of children are living without one or both parents because of migration to America, Europe, and other countries within the region (Marcus et al., 2023). A study carried out in Venezuela, reveals that 15% of adults migrating in 2020 reported leaving a child behind (Marcus et al., 2023). Studies in Venezuela have also shown that when one or both parents move, they leave their children either with grandparents (51%) or with their mothers (41%), while fewer children remain under the care of uncles and aunts (10%) or older siblings (2%) (Marcus et al., 2023). These figures imply that thousands of children are left behind to be cared for by either one parent or other caregivers.

While it is accepted that migration is a global phenomenon contributing to poverty reduction and economic development (Chamie, 2020), there has been serious concern over its effects on children left behind (Vilar-Compte et al., 2021; Chingwe, 2022; Chingwe and Chakanyuka, 2023a, 2023b; Marcus et al., 2023). Such a worry is reasonable seeing that these migrations usually imply family disintegration, whose effects may be detrimental to the well-being of those left behind. Studies conducted across the globe to ascertain the effects of parental migration on children left behind have produced mixed results with some revealing either negative or positive effects, while others note both negative and positive effects, or in other cases very little or no effects altogether (Cebotari and Bilisuma, 2021; Tesfaw and Minaye, 2022; Marcus et al., 2023; Crawley and Teye, 2024).

Zimbabwe has a long history of migration dating as far back as the 1850s (Crush and Tawodzera, 2016). Political and economic developments such as the Nguni incursions, discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa in the late-nineteenth century saw a great trek of Zimbabweans into South Africa to work on the newly found mines (Mlambo, 2010). The nature of labor contracts and accommodation given to migrant mine workers in South Africa during this time, restricted them to migrate without families, thus promoting the mushrooming of left-behind households. Furthermore, at the turn of the millennium, Zimbabwe experienced economic deterioration, which sent millions of citizens across the globe (Madebwe and Madebwe, 2017), creating a heightened population of children left behind. Unfortunately, it has been difficult for scholars to establish the exact figures of citizens who have migrated and children who have been left behind, due to lack of

sufficient and credible data; studies on migration have often focused more on adults than on children (Asis and Feranil, 2020).

Although Zimbabwe has had a long history of migration, until recently, little research has been done to uncover its effects on children left behind. Lack of research on this matter implies that few – if any – policies have been developed to manage possible consequences of such movements on children left behind. It is not until recently that interest in this study area has gained momentum. As observed by Auer and Felderer (2018), as a research area matures, it requires researchers to analyze and synthesize findings to draw deeper and more meaningful conclusions. One way of doing this is through systematic literature reviews. It is the purpose of this paper to analyze and synthesize studies conducted so far in Zimbabwe on the effects of parental migration on children left behind with the aim of informing policy-making processes and improving childcare practices.

To help comprehend the effects of parental migration on children left behind, the study adopted the child-rights conceptual framework. The current research embraces a child-rights oriented conceptual framework. The child-rights framework is hinged on the premise that an inclusive analysis of children's well-being focuses on four variables namely, health, education, economic activity, and psycho-social variables (UNICEF, 1989). Furthermore, it avows that the well-being of children left behind are influenced by several factors, such as individual uniqueness (for example, age of the child, their sex, and competencies), the nature of migration (for example, who migrates, predictability, and level of remittances), household and societal attributes (for example, societal values, social protection, and legal provisions) (Chingwe and Chakanyuka, 2023a, 2023b).

Study question

What effects does parental migration have on the well-being of children left behind in Zimbabwe?

Study objectives

- To examine the effects of parental migration on the well-being of children left behind in Zimbabwe.
- To recommend ways of improving care practices for children left behind in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to carry out this study effectively. A review gains the adjective “systematic” if it is based on a clearly formulated question, identifies relevant studies, assesses the quality of the studies, and summarizes the evidence gathered using an explicit methodology. While scholars propose several different steps in carrying out SLRs, this study considered

three steps namely, planning the review, the review itself and reporting (Khan et al., 2003, Siddaway et al., 2019).

Planning the review

Whereas Siddaway et al. (2019) recommend the search of at least two electronic databases for primary sources, Khan et al. (2003) add that this search should be as extensive as possible. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2003) opine that an extensive search for studies should include both computerized and printed sources with no restrictions on language. Informed by these and many other scholars, researchers in the current study selected three electronic libraries from which the search for potential studies was made. These libraries are: Academia – <https://www.academia.edu/>, Google scholar – <https://scholar.google.com>, and Taylor and Francis – <https://www.tandfonline.com/>. In addition to the electronic search and in attempting to reduce publication bias, researchers with one or more publications on the topic were contacted for any forthcoming data or unpublished work that could be of interest to this study (Ferguson and Brannick, 2012). Google scholar was also used to search for relevant unpublished dissertations.

Having identified the digital libraries, researchers developed search strings, which helped to facilitate the searches. Taking into consideration tips from Shafiq et al. (2020) and Parveen et al. (2022), the researchers used “AND” and “OR” Boolean search operators to formulate search strings as follows: (effects OR impact, experiences, OR challenges) AND (children left behind OR adolescents left behind, OR boy children left behind OR girl children left behind) AND (labor migration OR parental migration, migrant parents, OR absent parents).

In addition, to clearly defining boundaries of the review, researchers formulated criteria to include and exclude selected primary studies before the search commenced (Siddaway et al., 2019). The inclusion and exclusion criteria were adapted and blended from those of Akbar et al. (2019) and Siddaway et al. (2019). The criteria for inclusion in this SLR were: First, studies must be a conference paper, journal article, or book chapter. Second, studies must describe the effects of parental migration on children left behind, provide empirical investigations (for instance, interview [IR], questionnaire survey [QS], case study [CS], grounded theory [GT], content analysis [CA], action research [AR], and mixed methods research [MMRs]). Third, studies must have been carried out in Zimbabwe between 2010 and 2023 with children as part of their samples. Lastly, unpublished studies must be dissertations or articles written by authors who have one or more published articles on the same topic. Where two or more studies have similar findings, the most updated published version was adopted.

The final step in the planning phase involved carrying out quality assessment (QA). Although a wide range of tools are proposed for assessing study quality, this study considered the recommendations by Kitchenham and Charters (2007). QA criteria guided the evaluation of the significance of each primary study when the

results were integrated (Akbar et al., 2019). Moreover, QA enabled the clarification of findings leading to the drawing of recommendations for future inquiries. For this purpose, researchers generated a checklist to evaluate selected primary studies. The checklist had four questions (QA¹ to QA⁴). Correspondingly, the score 1 was assigned to a study that provided an acceptable answer for the listed categories, while 0.5 was allocated to a study that partially met the requirements of a category on the checklist. Lastly, where a study's answer to the category on the checklist failed to meet the requirements, it was given a score of 0. For each question, the assessment was made, as shown in Table 1.

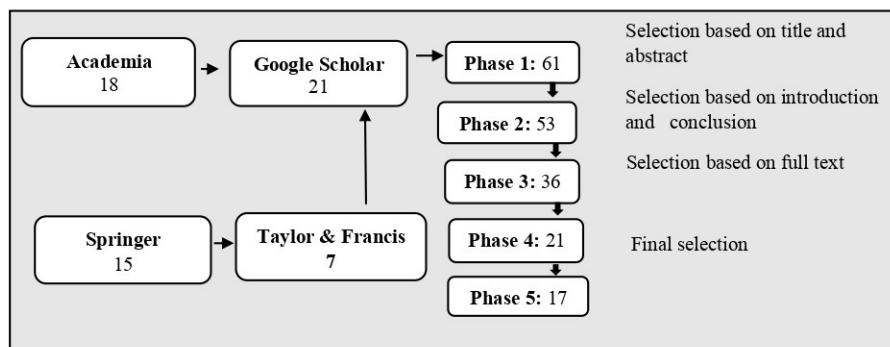
Table 1: Quality assessment checklist

QA Questions	Checklist questions
QA ¹	Does the adopted research method(s) link with research questions?
QA ²	Does the study explore effects of parental migration on children left behind?
QA ³	Do the empirical data inform childcare practices?
QA ⁴	Are the findings related to a justification of the research questions?

Source: Author's own work

The review

Carrying out the review involved three steps, namely, running the final selection of primary studies, extracting data, and synthesizing the data. To enhance the quality and enable data extraction, studies went through a final selection process using the tollgate approach. Results of the final selection were presented using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses method (PRISMA), as shown in Figure 1. The preliminary search done on the four selected digital libraries, using search strings, inclusion and exclusion criteria generated 61 studies. Of these, the research team chose 17 primary studies – equivalent to 27.9% of the total collected studies – to answer the study's research question through the tollgate approach. In this process, the first author extracted 17 final primary studies, the second and third authors diligently reviewed studies that made it to the final list, while the fourth author allocated quality scores guided by the QA criteria. The 17 chosen studies were sufficient for a literature review process, as affirmed by Astadi et al. (2022). The list of selected studies is provided in Appendix A.

Figure 1:

Source: Author's own work

After carrying out the final selection of primary sources, researchers proceeded with data extraction, which was followed by an interrater reliability analysis (Parveen et al., 2022). An external reviewer was invited to carry out the interrater reliability analysis using a non-parametric Kendall coefficient test of concordance (W) to check interrater agreement between the authors and an external reviewer. The latter randomly picked 10 studies from the first phase of the tollgate approach and performed all steps involved, as shown in Figure 1. To show total disagreement, the value of $W=0$ was used, whereas to show total agreement, the value of $W=1$ was used. Results of the interrater reliability test for 10 randomly selected studies was $W=.860$, indicating substantial agreement between the authors and the external reviewer.

The last step involved data synthesis. This involved extracting the effects of parental migration on the well-being of children left behind from the selected 17 studies in line with the research question formulated at the beginning of the study. The research team combined and interpreted the collected data to allow for the presentation of findings in the section below.

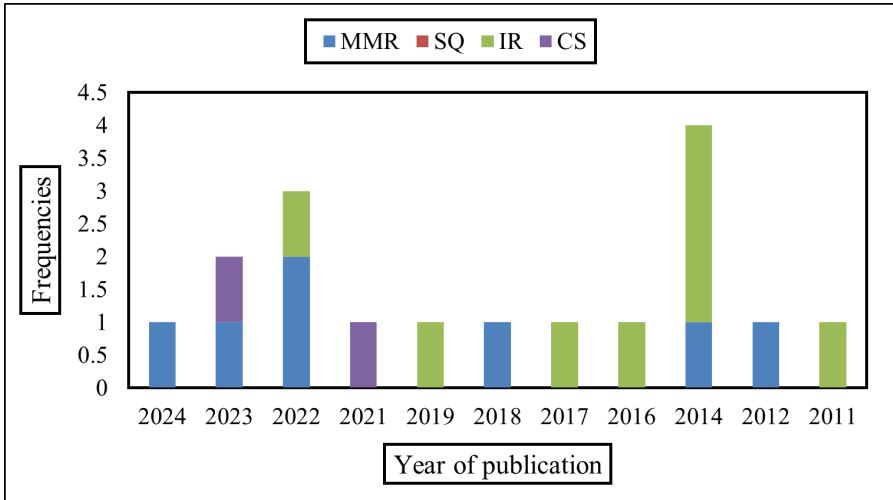
Reporting the review

The review report focuses on key areas like quality attributes, temporal distribution, research methods used, distribution by location, children's ages, and gender of the children sampled. To determine the quality attributes of the studies, the research team used four QA questions shown in Table 1 and analyzed QA scores for each primary study. Interestingly, the bulk of the selected studies attained QA scores $\geq 75\%$. These scores imply that studies in the final selection can significantly answer this study's research question, especially since a QA score of 40% was adopted as a threshold for selecting primary studies (Inayat et al., 2015).

Figure 2 displays the publication dates of the selected primary studies, ranging from 2011 to 2024. Of these, 24% were published in 2014, 18% in 2022, 12% in 2023, with the remaining years having 6% each. This time frame is based on the results of

the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the SLR approach. It is evident that there are still very few studies on the effects of parental migration over the years. This implies that the subject has not received much attention in the country under study, despite a surge in parental migration in Zimbabwe over the years.

Figure 2:

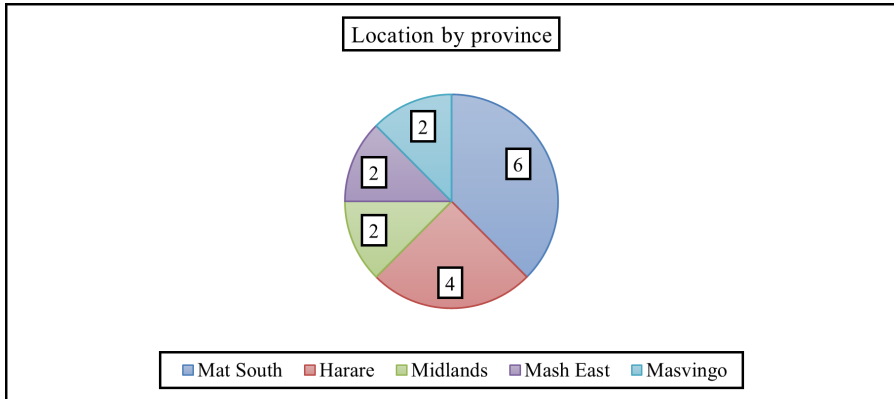


Source: Author's own work

The research methods used in the selected studies are presented in Figure 2. The chronological breakdown of these research methods is as follows:

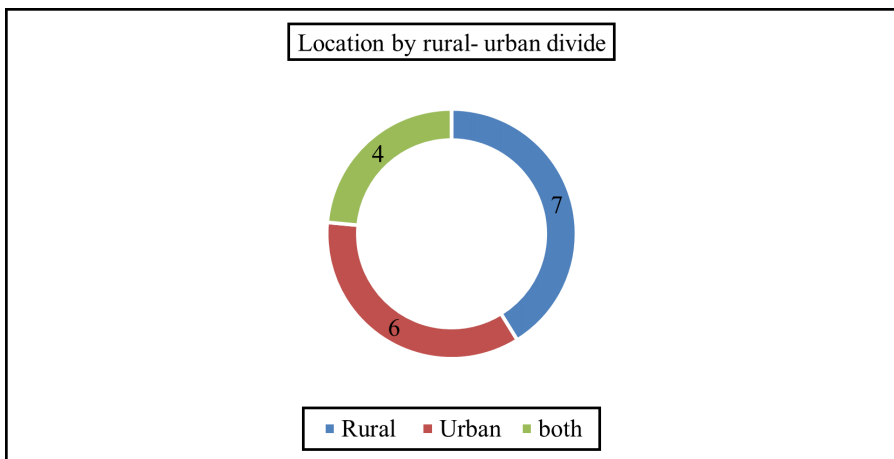
- Year 2011: Interviews (IR) – 1 or 6%
- Year 2012: Mixed methods research (MMR) – 1 or 6%
- Year 2014: MMR – 1 or 6%; IR – 3 or 18%
- Year 2016: IR – 1 or 6%
- Year 2017: IR – 1 or 6%
- Year 2018: MMR – 1 or 6%
- Year 2019: IR – 1 or 6%
- Year 2021: Case study (CS) – 1 or 6%
- Year 2022: MMR – 2 or 12; IR – 1 or 6%
- Year 2023: MMR – 1 or 6%; CS – 1 or 6%
- Year 2024: MMR – 1 or 6%.

These findings show a widespread use of IR and MMR. These two methods are compatible with the collection of participant views and experiences.

Figure 3:

Source: Author's own work

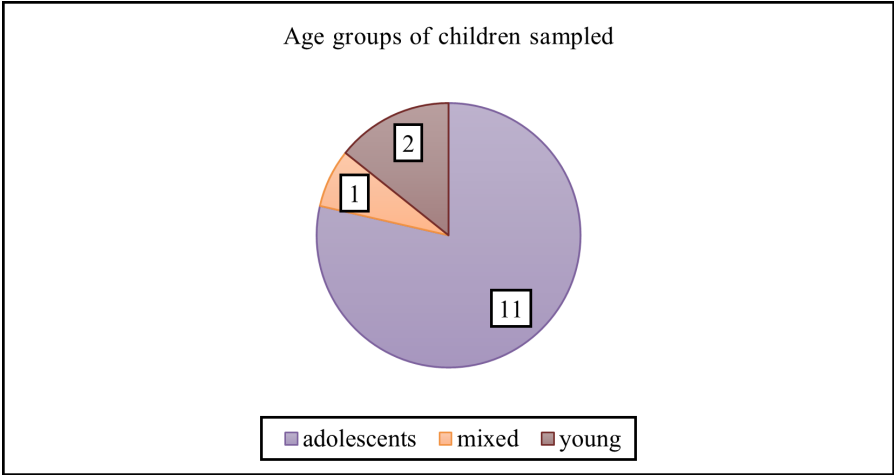
The distribution of studies by location displayed in Figure 3 shows that studies were carried out in half of Zimbabwe's provinces, with most of them done in Matabeleland South, which has a long history of parental migration to South Africa (Dube, 2014).

Figure 4:

Source: Author's own work

Figure 4 shows that most of the studies were conducted in rural settings, followed by those carried out in urban settings, and lastly, those which combined both rural and urban settings.

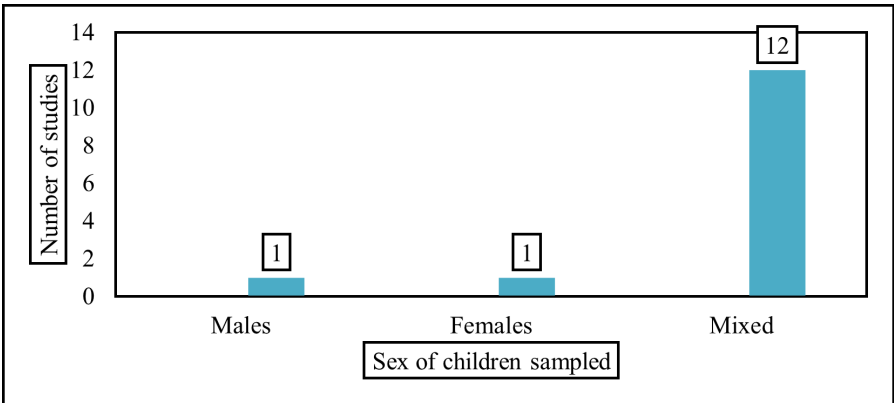
Figure 5:



Source: Author's own work

Figure 5 shows the distribution of studies by the ages of children sampled. Most studies included adolescent children left behind as key participants, with a few having both adolescents and younger children, while only one study involved younger children only. The three remaining studies not reflected in Figure 5 did not include children at all but only caregivers and other adult stakeholders. Involving children in studies about them is progressive, pragmatic, and more child-centered, allowing them to narrate their day-to-day experiences as active participants in research (Semerci and Erdogan, 2014).

Figure 6:



Source: Author's own work

Figure 6 shows that 12 studies included both boys and girls in their samples, while two included either boys only or girls only. The sex of children sampled is important, as it may provide insights into the effects of being left behind. For instance, Makondo (2022) found that girls left behind are more exposed to depression because of stigmatization, child labor, sexual exploitation, heading households left behind, and missing their migrant parents. Similar findings were also uncovered in China by Gao et al. (2010), where migrant girls were found to be more exposed to unhealthy behaviors like smoking and drinking than those from non-migrant households.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The key objective of this study is to uncover the effects of parental migration on children left behind in Zimbabwe to recommend ways of improving care practices for them. In addressing this objective, the effects of parental migration are divided into four outcomes areas of children's well-being, namely, educational, economic, physical health, and psychological variables. This is a child-rights-centered approach, according more value to the condition of children's lives with the objective of improving the quality of life in these four domains (Semerci and Erdogan, 2014). These four variables convey obligations that nations have toward each child within their territory. All these responsibilities must be afforded to each child without discrimination of any kind, as outlined by the United Nations (Catrinescu et al., 2011).

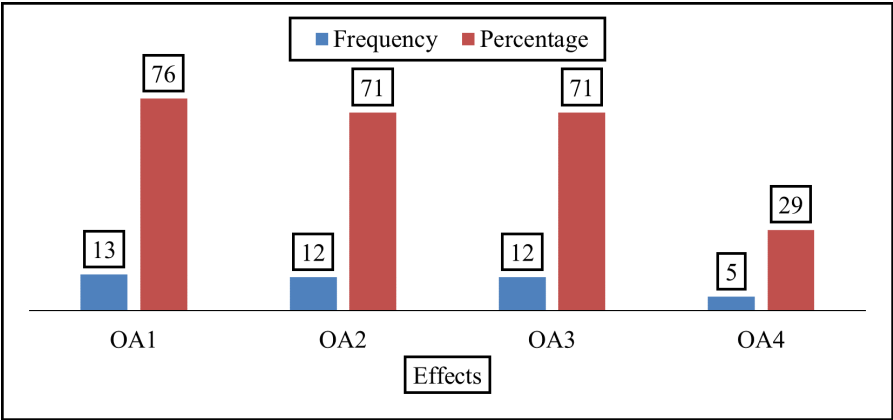
This study adopted SLR to place these effects and interventions in order of frequency. The research team observed that negative effects far outweighed positive effects in all four outcome areas, with psychological, educational, and economic areas having a frequency of over 50%. The effects and proposed interventions with a frequency of at least 50% were regarded as important and are discussed below, in congruence with other SLR studies (Akbar et al., 2019, Parveen et al., 2022). The effects and proposed interventions identified, along with their frequency and percentage are shown in Table 2 and Figure 7.

Table 2: List of effects identified

S.#	Effects identified	Frq. n=17	%	IDs of Selected Primary Studies (SPS)
OA1	Psychological effects	13	76	P1, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17
OA2	Educational effects	12	71	P2, P5, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17
OA3	Economic effects	12	71	P4, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17
OA4	Physical health effects	5	29	P3, P10, P11, P16, P17

Source: Author's own work

Figure 7 here



Source: Author's own work

The psychological effects (OA1), at 76%, appear in most selected primary sources as prominent effects of parental migration experienced by children left behind. In their study, Chingwe and Chakanyuka (2023) report that the most noticeable psychological effects of migration are more negative than positive and are characterized by heightened levels of hopelessness, misery, suicidal thoughts, rage, and apprehension. Similarly, some left-behind children interviewed by Filippa (2011) felt excluded and rejected and displayed signs of depression – more than just mere sadness.

While separation anxiety primarily accounts for negative psychological effects of parental migration, matters are in some cases worsened by strained parental relations. Pasura (2008) observes that most Zimbabwean migrant marriages are failing and breaking up. Strained relationships between parents create situations in which left-behind parents vent their anger, frustrations, and stress on children left behind, whom they expect to fully assist in shouldering extended household responsibilities. Studies reveal that usually women who are left behind carry a huge emotional burden, with the potential to affect their behavior patterns negatively, directly affecting their children's psychological well-being (Karumazondo et al., 2022).

Furthermore, children left behind are said to be judged negatively, stigmatized, bullied, and abused, aggravating their already fragile psychological well-being. Makondo (2022) notes that adolescent girl children left behind are often regarded as children without guidance and direction and are frequently the subject of community and peer gossip. Such occurrences are worsened when children left behind make mistakes – like any other children do – providing sufficient evidence to community members to offensively label them as children “without manners.” This labeling and stigma serve to worsen the psychological well-being of children left behind. Interestingly, several studies confirm that children left behind are prone to all sorts of abuse, such as emotional, sexual, and physical by primary caregivers,

who may be relatives or neighbors. Tawodzera and Themane (2019) observe that children left behind are vulnerable and prone to abuse and often lack viable social support networks. Abuse of all sorts directly affects the psychological well-being of these children, who often have nobody to protect them. The psychological turmoil caused by parental migration often degenerates into undesirable behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, violence, and petty crime (Chingwe and Chakanyuka, 2023b).

Surprisingly, despite the confirmed negative effects of parental migration, other children left behind appear to thrive under the prevailing adverse conditions. Such children often find solace in extra-mural activities, participating in religious and other social youth activities, and hanging out with friends (Makondo, 2022). In spite of experiencing separation anxiety and related stressors, some left-behind children develop conscious ways of adapting to stress and anxiety in a positive and constructive way by using thoughts and behaviors inclined toward searching for information, problem-solving, seeking help from others, recognizing and accepting their true feelings, establishing goals, and striving to achieve them (Filippa, 2011).

The educational effects (OA2) are presented as crucial effects of parental migration on children left behind. These children's educational outcomes are usually affected adversely by parental migration. The inescapable increase in household and external workloads that children are obligated to take up – usually responsibilities shouldered by migrant parents – have an adverse impact on their concentration in school and reduce their time to do school-related work. The situation is worse in newly created child-headed households, where older children care for their siblings, while also needing to care for their own educational needs.

Unsurprisingly, these effects are gendered – girls evidently carry heavier household workloads in assuming nurturing and caring roles in the left-behind households. Furthermore, studies reveal that migration does not always guarantee a steady flow of remittances. In fact, several migrant parents either failed to consistently pay school fees or delayed its payment, thus causing disruptions in children's education (Kufakurinani et al., 2014). The strained mental health of children left behind, as explained above, is yet another factor compromising the educational performance of children left behind, as it reduces their attention span and impairs their concentration.

The lack of parental guidance, motivation, and direct involvement in children's school activities cumulatively influence the educational outcomes of children left behind in extremely negative ways. Children who are left in the care of elderly members of their extended families are bereft of people who can assist them with education-related tasks and activities and consequently perform below expected standards and their own potential (Rupande, 2014). Sadly, within the very educational environment mandated to develop and nurture children's potential, some teachers, often through no fault of their own, fail to provide the educational, social, and mental needs of these children (Tawodzera and Themane, 2019; Makondo, 2022). In worst cases, some teachers exacerbate the vulnerabilities and insecurities of left-behind

children by perpetuating stereotypes and stigmatization. Conversely, where left-behind children have access to a regular supply of remittances and material goods, some of them may be easily swayed off educational pursuits, thereby compromising their academic outcomes (Dube, 2014).

Although most studies portray a negative outlook of these children's educational outcomes, there are some positive effects. In negligible instances, parental migration has been found to help boost children's educational outcomes through consistent and timely remittances for payment of school fees and the provision of learning materials and school uniforms (Weda and Siziba, 2016; Ndlovu and Tigere, 2018).

Regarding the economic effects (OA3) – these appear to share similar weightage as effects on educational outcomes. While global studies have widely confirmed the economic benefits of parental migration on children left behind, studies carried out in Zimbabwe suggest that these benefits are quite minimal and are overshadowed by the negative effects of the phenomenon in the country. Some studies show that Zimbabwean parental migration to Global South countries are generally characterized by low economic benefits, especially since most of the migrants do casual, menial jobs. Makina (2010) observes that most Zimbabweans in Johannesburg earn very little to sustain themselves and children left behind. Illegal entry into these neighboring countries and the lack of documentation restrict migrants to contract work and low-paying jobs, thus severely limiting their capacity to remit meaningfully (Chingwe, 2022). Bolt (2016) and Fisayo-Bambi (2020) aver that migration of Zimbabweans to neighboring countries such as South Africa are usually through illicit entries, unlike migrations to countries further afield, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States of America in the Global North. Tevera and Chikanda (2009) note that while remittances in Zimbabwe come from a wide range of countries, migrants in overseas countries remit more than those within Southern Africa.

Mabharani's (2014) study on children left behind in Dzivarasekwa, a suburb of western Harare, highlights the risk of child labor due to parental absence. While some studies foreground the difficulty of differentiating between child labor and child work, (see, for example, Catrinescu et al., 2011), Mabharani (2014) concludes that incidences of child labor are exacerbated by the increase in parental migration in Zimbabwe. Parental absence evidently drives many adolescent children left behind to search for paid labor on farms and plantations to fend for their younger siblings and at times including the elderly, sick and incapacitated relatives (Makondo, 2022). Zirima (2017) confirms this phenomenon in a study conducted in Mwenezi, in which teachers acknowledged that children left behind are susceptible to child labor.

Studies further report that some left-behind children take up so much extra household duties previously done by migrant parents, that they often miss school (Tawodzera and Themane, 2019). In the same vein, findings by Makondo's (2022) study in Chiredzi show that adolescent girls left behind experience overwhelming household chores, effectively compromising their educational outcomes.

On the contrary, a limited number of children left behind receive substantial remittances almost consistently, helping them to pay for essential services and school fees and to enhance their lifestyle (Dube, 2014; Kufakurinani et al., 2014; Mabharani, 2014). However, some scholars observe that some of these children end up being wasteful, spending money on fancy clothes, drugs, and alcohol. It is unfortunate that such children become wayward to the extent of engaging in wild parties, commonly known as *Vuzu*, where the abuse of drugs, alcohol, sex, and other socially unacceptable activities take place (Chingwe and Chakanyuka, 2023a, 2023b).

While remittances may help to improve educational outcomes, there are cases where left-behind have evidently become too wayward, to the extent of disrespecting teachers and eventually dropping out of school, because they supposedly have better lifestyles than their teachers or other personalities who, under different circumstances, would be their mentors or role models (Kufakurinani et al., 2014). Improved economic prospects and lifestyles due to parental migration have also reportedly attracted unscrupulous relatives and neighbors, who take advantage of the vulnerability of children left behind to loot the children's material or financial assets and, in worst cases, abuse them in multiple ways (Mabharani, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The increasing number of Zimbabweans migrating to other countries motivated us to explore the effects of parental migration on children left behind. Using the SLR procedure, these effects were categorized into four domains, namely, health, educational, economic, and psychological outcomes. Numerous negative effects were identified, notably in the psychological, educational, and economic domains and are deemed critical. Negligible positive effects were noted in educational and economic domains; hence, it can be concluded that parental migration is “a curate's egg.”

The categorization of these four domains can help different organizations and stakeholders in taking measures to improve social protection and care practices for children left behind. Addressing effects of left-behind children requires support from the government and all stakeholders. Before any measures or policies can be fully initiated or implemented, it is vital to gather comprehensive data on the magnitude, profile, and needs of children left behind. The findings in this study imply that there is need for promoting research on children left behind to inform policy decisions. Furthermore, there is a need to update and strengthen child protection systems in line with the needs of children left behind. Finally, it is imperative for relevant governmental arms and agencies to be capacitated to ensure that policies can adapt and expressly provide for the protection of children left behind.

Regarding areas of concern pertaining to this study: First, the bulk of the data was collected by the corresponding author of this article, who has four articles included in the review. This method may be considered a threat to the validity of the study findings, since the researcher could have collected biased data. For that reason, to attend to this possible threat, co-authors randomly inspected and validated

the collected data. Second, it was also observed that a few of the selected studies did not fully describe the principal effects of migration on children but generalized them to the left-behind household, inclusive of adults, which could be a potential threat to the internal validity of the results of this study. It appears that some scholars may not necessarily be concerned about children per se, but the entire family left behind. However, it may still be possible to isolate effects inclined to children only, while in other cases, some effects related to adults left behind may have a ripple effect on the children. Third, we noted that three of the studies selected excluded children from their samples, which may limit the authenticity of their findings. This approach has, however, been the norm, which has recently shifted from focusing on the future welfare of children to the current well-being of children, a more child-centered approach promoting children's involvement in narrating their own stories (Semerci and Erdogan, 2014).

This SLR delineated studies carried out in terms of location based on provinces, rural-urban divide, and the age range and sex of children sampled. It is anticipated that this categorization can be helpful in addressing gaps and providing direction for future studies. We are confident that the effects identified provide a corpus of knowledge for prospective researchers to conduct future research.

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